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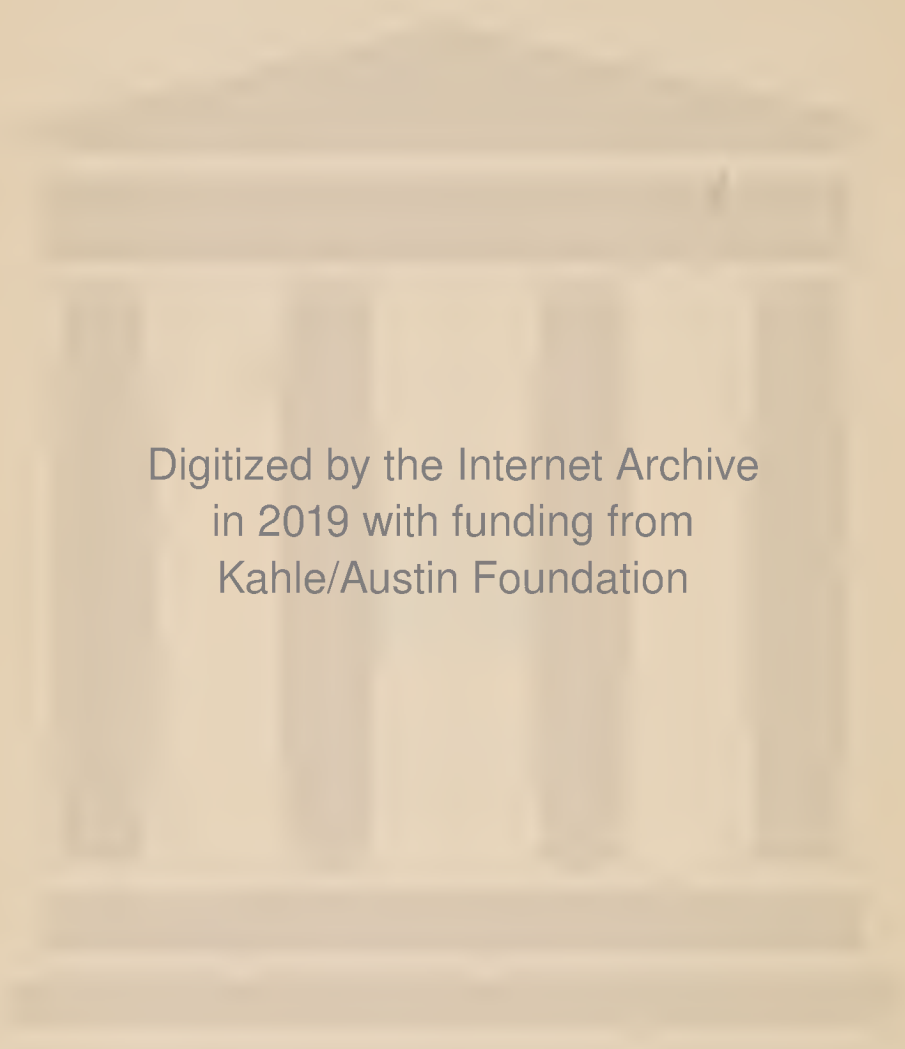


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THE SINS OF THE FATHERS

SINS OF THE FATHERS

and other tales

By

GEORGE GISSING



1924

PASCAL COVICI, *Publisher*
CHICAGO

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Introduction

In the twentieth year of his melancholy existence, George Robert Gissing, having involved himself in an offense against the law, was for a time imprisoned, then sent by his friends to America. For a while he lived upon what money he had brought with him, and for a time he taught the classics in Boston. Then his money failed him, and he faced a crisis. He purchased an emigrant ticket for Chicago, and in the western metropolis endeavored to make a living by the pen. The four tales, here for the first time published between covers are all that have been discovered of his work of that period. All were contributed to the Chicago Tribune, and probably were all that he did for that journal, although there is reason to believe that he published other work of a literary nature at about this time. The year was 1877, and the tales were published in the Saturday supplement of the Tribune in the following order:

“The Sins of the Fathers,” March 10, 1877. Unsigned.

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"R. I. P." March 31, 1877. Unsigned.

"Too Dearly Bought," April 4, 1877.
Signed "G. R. G."

"Gretchen," May 12, 1877. Signed
"G. R. G."

For years, admirers of the later work of Gissing wondered about these tales. Their names were not known; it was known only that he had written some short stories for the Chicago Tribune during his dreary American adventure. Several attempts were made to discover them, and one fairly elaborate attempt was undertaken by the late Bert Leston Taylor ("B. L. T."), when he was conducting a column in the Tribune. All attempts failed until Mr. Christopher Hagerup took the field. Shortly after the war, I met Mr. Hagerup, and discovered in him an enthusiastic admirer of Gissing's work and a collector of that novelist's "first editions." I was in both lines myself, and we passed together many pleasant evenings discussing Gissing and others whom we had elected to honor. Some day, said we, since we actually live in Chicago, we must explore those old Tribune files, and find those lost stories. Actually, each of us already had begun his exploration, unknown to the other

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—each determined to be first. As it happened, Hagerup found them; found them where I would have failed perhaps, for it was only his extraordinary interest in and knowledge of Gissing and Gissing's manner that enabled him to detect, by their style and content, the two unsigned contributions. He painstakingly copied them from the yellowed files with a stub of a pencil, and filed them away in his collection against the day when he would cause them to be privately printed for other Gissing "fans." Later, he decided that they were not important enough to justify publication.

Now that, of course, is an easy enough decision to reach when one is oneself in possession of that which one would deny others. But there were other Gissing collectors who had not read the tales, who still wished to read them, and who had not the opportunity Hagerup and I had to read them in the Tribune files or copy them for private delectation. And so, for those others, I privately determined some day to reprint the four discovered stories. The day came with the advent into the publishing business of Pascal Covici, and I have just stated my reasons for causing publica-

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tion and my justification of the reappearance in print of these four sorry enough little tales. It is inevitable that critics will find them "hardly worth the reprinting," and no doubt there will be many to assert that I have done Gissing's reputation a disservice in giving his apprentice work to the public. The first objection may be true enough, but the second I deny. The early work of an author of Gissing's ability is not negligible, and often is of considerable biographical and bibliographical interest. And, anyway, collectors of a man's work are always grateful for his least word, and the collectors of the work of George Gissing are an increasing race. To them, then, let the present volume be dedicated.

The story of Gissing's American adventure is gloomily entertaining, and may be told here to make the volume complete. The reprinted tales are part of that story, which is best told in his own words, in his best-known novel, "New Grub Street," in which it is placed in the mouth of Whelpdale, a London hack. I copy it entire.

"I have lived for five days on a few cents' worth of peanuts in the States."

"What are peanuts, Mr. Whelpdale?" asked Dora.

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Delighted with the question, Whelpdale described that undesirable species of food.

"It was in Troy," he went on, "Troy, N. Y. To think that a man should live on peanuts in a town called Troy!"

"Tell us those adventures," cried Jasper. "It's a long time since I heard them, and the girls will enjoy it vastly."

Dora looked at him with such good-humored interest that the traveler needed no further persuasion.

"It came to pass in those days," he began, "that I inherited from my godfather a small, a very small, sum of money. I was making strenuous efforts to write for magazines, with absolutely no encouragement. As everybody was talking just then of the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, I conceived the brilliant idea of crossing the Atlantic, in the hope that I might find valuable literary material at the Exhibition—or Exposition, as they called it—and elsewhere. I won't trouble you with an account of how I lived whilst I still had money; sufficient that no one would accept the articles I sent to England, and that at last I got into perilous straits. I went to New York, and thought of returning home, but the spirit of adventure was strong in me. 'I'll go west,' I said to myself. 'There I am bound to find material.' And go I did, taking an emigrant train to Chicago. It was

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December, and I should like you to imagine what a journey of a thousand miles by an emigrant train meant at that season. The cars were deadly cold, and what with that and the hardness of the seats I found it impossible to sleep; it reminded me of tortures I had read about; I thought my brain would have burst with the need of sleeping. At Cleveland, in Ohio, we had to wait several hours in the night; I left the station and wandered about till I found myself on the edge of a great cliff that looked over Lake Erie. A magnificent picture! Brilliant moonlight, and all the lake away to the horizon frozen and covered with snow. The clocks struck two as I stood there."

He was interrupted by the entrance of a servant who brought coffee.

"Nothing could be more welcome," cried Dora. "Mr. Whelpdale makes one feel quite chilly."

There was laughter and chatting whilst Maud poured out the beverage. Then Whelpdale pursued his narrative.

"I reached Chicago with not quite five dollars in my pockets, and, with a courage which I now marvel at, I paid immediately four dollars and a half for a week's board and lodging. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'for a week I am safe. If I earn nothing in that time, at least I shall owe nothing when I have to turn out into the streets.' It was a rather dirty little boarding-house, in Wabash Avenue, and

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occupied, as I soon found, almost entirely by actors. There was no fireplace in my bedroom, and if there had been I couldn't have afforded a fire. But that mattered little; what I had to do was to set forth and discover some way of making money. Don't suppose that I was in a desperate state of mind; how it was, I don't quite know, but I felt decidedly cheerful. It was pleasant to be in this new region of the earth, and I went about the town like a tourist who has abundant resources."

He sipped his coffee.

"I saw nothing for it but to apply at the office of some newspaper, and as I happened to light upon the biggest of them first of all, I put on a bold face, marched in, asked if I could see the editor. There was no difficulty whatever about this; I was told to ascend by means of the 'elevator' to an upper storey, and there I walked into a comfortable little room where a youngish man sat smoking a cigar at a table covered with print and manuscript. I introduced myself, stated my business. 'Can you give me work of any kind on your paper?' 'Well, what experience have you had?' 'None whatever.' The editor smiled. 'I'm very much afraid you would be no use to us. But what do you think you could do?' Well now, there was but one thing that by any possibility I could do. I asked him: 'Do you publish any fiction—short stories?' 'Yes, we're always glad of a short story, if it's good.' This was

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a big daily paper; they have weekly supplements of all conceivable kinds of matter. 'Well,' I said, 'if I write a story of English life, will you consider it?' 'With pleasure.' I left him, and went out as if my existence were henceforth provided for."

He laughed heartily, and was joined by his hearers.

"It was a great thing to be permitted to write a story, but then—what story? I went down to the shore of Lake Michigan; walked there for half an hour in an icy wind. Then I looked for a stationer's shop, and laid out a few of my remaining cents in the purchase of pen, ink, and paper—my stock of all these things was at an end when I left New York. Then back to the boarding-house. Impossible to write in my bedroom, the temperature was below zero; there was no choice but to sit down in the common room, a place like the smoke-room of a poor commercial hotel in England. A dozen men were gathered about the fire, smoking, talking, quarreling. Favorable conditions, you see, for literary effort. But the story had to be written, and write it I did, sitting there at the end of a deal table; I finished it in less than a couple of days, a good long story, enough to fill three columns of the huge paper. I stand amazed at my power of concentration as often as I think of it!"

"And was it accepted?" asked Dora.

"You shall hear. I took my manuscript to the

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editor, and he told me to come and see him again next morning. I didn't forget the appointment. As I entered he smiled in a very promising way, and said, 'I think your story will do. I'll put it into the Saturday supplement. Call on Saturday morning and I'll remunerate you.' How well I remember that word 'remunerate'! I have had an affection for the word ever since. And remunerate me he did; scribbled something on a scrap of paper, which I presented to the cashier. The sum was eighteen dollars. Behold me saved!"

He sipped his coffee again.

"I have never come across an English editor who treated me with anything like that consideration and general kindness. How the man had time, in his position, to see me so often, and do things in such a human way, I can't understand. Imagine anyone trying the same at the office of a London newspaper! To begin with, one couldn't see the editor at all. I shall always think with profound gratitude of that man with the peaked brown beard and pleasant smile."

"But did the peanuts come after that?" inquired Dora.

"Alas! they did. For some months I supported myself in Chicago, writing for that same paper, and for others. But at length the flow of my inspiration was checked; I had written myself out. And I began to grow homesick, wanted to get back to

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England. The result was that I found myself one day in New York again, but without money enough to pay for a passage home. I tried to write one more story. But it happened, as I was looking over newspapers in a reading-room, that I saw one of my Chicago tales copied into a paper published at Troy. Now Troy was not very far off, and it occurred to me that, if I went there, the editor of this paper might be disposed to employ me, seeing he had a taste for my fiction. And I went, up the Hudson by steamboat. On landing at Troy I was as badly off as when I reached Chicago; I had less than a dollar. And the worst of it was I had come on a vain errand; the editor treated me with scant courtesy, and no work was to be got. I took a little room, paying for it day by day, and in the meantime I fed on those loathsome peanuts, buying a handful in the streets now and then. And I assure you I looked starvation in the face."

"What sort of a town is Troy?" asked Marian, speaking for the first time.

"Don't ask me. They make straw hats there principally, and they sell peanuts. More I remember not."

"But you didn't starve to death," said Maud.

"No, I just didn't. I went one afternoon into a lawyer's office, thinking I might get some copying-work, and there I found an odd-looking old man, sitting with an open Bible on his knees. He ex-

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plained to me that he wasn't the lawyer; that the lawyer was away on business, and that he was just guarding the office. Well, could he help me? He meditated, and a thought occurred to him. 'Go,' he said, 'to such-and-such a boarding-house, and ask for Mr. Freeman Sterling. He is just starting on a business tour, and wants a young man to accompany him.' I didn't dream of asking what the business was, but sped, as fast as my trembling limbs would carry me, to the address he had mentioned. I asked for Mr. Freeman Sterling, and found him. He was a photographer, and his business at present was to go about getting orders for the reproducing of old portraits. A good-natured young fellow. He said he liked the look of me, and on the spot engaged me to assist him in a house-to-house visitation. He would pay for my board and lodging, and give me a commission on all the orders I obtained. Forthwith I sat down to a 'square meal,' and ate—my conscience, how I ate!"

"You were not eminently successful in that pursuit, I think?" said Jasper.

"I don't think I got half-a-dozen orders. Yet that good Samaritan supported me for five or six weeks, whilst we traveled from Troy to Boston. It couldn't go on; I was ashamed of myself; at last I told him that we must part. Upon my word, I believe he would have paid my expenses for another month; why, I can't understand. But he had a vast

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respect for me because I had written in newspapers, and I do seriously think that he didn't like to tell me I was a useless fellow. We parted on the very best of terms in Boston."

"And you again had recourse to peanuts?" asked Dora.

"Well, no. In the meantime I had written to someone in England, begging the loan of just enough money to enable me to get home. The money came a day after I had seen Sterling off by train."

The photographer, in this version, is said actually to have been a traveler in gas-fittings; but the account is believed to be a fairly accurate narration of Gissing's American experiences. And here, following this editorial delay, are the tales Gissing wrote on the deal table in his Wabash Avenue lodgings. May something in them, or in my account of their author, lead new readers to the later, finer work of George Gissing.

VINCENT STARRETT.

THE SINS OF THE FATHERS

The Sins of the Fathers

I.

A BROAD archway, the gloom of its chill, murky shadow only deepened by the flicker of the shattered gas-lamp that hangs from the centre, its silence only broken by the agonized weeping of a poor girl who strives to still the throbbing of her temples by pressing them against the clammy stones; whilst, little as one would imagine it, but a few paces separate her from the crowd and glare of the wide streets — such a scene is but too common after nightfall in the heart of a great English manufacturing town. As such it did not at first produce a very startling effect upon Leonard Vincent, who, as he was hurrying home by short cuts from a social gathering of fellow-students, was stopped at the mouth of the archway by the sounds of distress

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that fell upon his ear; but his interest was more vividly awakened as he caught a glimpse of the upturned face faintly illumined by the light which just then a gust of wind blew into a flame. The dark, flashing eyes, the long, black hair all unkempt and streaming over the girl's shoulders, the face, lovely in its outlines, now weird with its look of agony and ghastly pale, made a picture such as he had never looked on, and held him for a moment as immovable as though he had been gazing upon the head of Medusa. It was but for a moment, however, that he remained irresolute. Stepping quietly up to the sobbing girl, who was too much absorbed in her own grief to notice his presence, Vincent touched her lightly on the shoulder. She instantly turned round to meet his gaze; suppressing with a sudden and violent effort any trace of her emotion save the great tears, which she could not at once check in their course down her cheeks. The cheeks were pale and somewhat sunken, as if hunger as well as grief had begun to

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mar her beauty, and, as she looked at the young man's face with a proud, impatient gaze, her tightly-compressed lips trembling despite her efforts, she aroused in him a feeling of the profoundest compassion. For some minutes they stood regarding each other in silence; then, as he saw the girl determined not to speak, Vincent began to address her, though with diffidence.

"May I ask the cause of your grief? Do not think me rude. I ask because I might—it is my wish to help you."

The young man, usually somewhat brusque in his manner of addressing his inferiors in station, was somewhat surprised at the tone he was led to adopt. The position of the girl before him, and the plain, much-worn character of her dress, showed that she belonged to the lower class; yet he almost quailed before her look, and felt unconsciously that in nature she was not beneath him.

The object of his compassion stood for a moment as if undecided; then, the proud

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expression on her face still unaltered, replied briefly and in a low, quick voice:

"I wish to be alone. You are very kind. I do not need help."

Leonard Vincent smiled in spite of his pity.

"You must allow me to doubt that," he said. "Will you not trust me? It is not from mere curiosity that I ask your confidence. I feel sure I can help you, if you will let me."

Again she replied quickly, but the tone was not that of her former speech:

"You are very kind. It is long since I have been spoken to kindly. But I need no help, indeed I need none."

The young man again smiled as he looked in her still unmoved face.

"You are very proud," he said. "It is long since I met any one so proud. I am proud, too. Will you not confide in a kindred spirit?"

It was now her turn to smile, and for a moment her countenance brightened with a

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look that was like the faint memory of happiness long past. It was enough that there was a sign of relenting. Vincent continued to urge her, and, after a few moments of hesitation, she seemed about to comply with his request.

“Why should I trouble you with a miserable story? You know it all before I begin. And yet, perhaps, you seem as if you had a good home and good parents; I will tell you in a few words. It will make me cry again; that is good for my pride.”

Then she told, briefly and plainly, the story of her young days; of a happy childhood in a little market-town in the south of England, of schooldays, and the joys of loving companions. All was happy till her father, who had been a small farmer, died, and her mother, a beautiful woman, yielded to their rich landlord's entreaties, and married him. She had acted on an impulse of pride, and her punishment was severe. Laura Lindon, her only child, was hated by her step-father, chiefly because she would

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not give up her old rustic friends. The man, whose nature was coarse and vulgar, abused the poor girl dreadfully, till at length her life became intolerable to her.

“What could I do? I could not kill myself for my poor mother’s sake; so I resolved to leave home. I came North, accompanied by a girl of my own age, who had always been my best friend. For a few weeks we just managed to live on what we got for sewing, and then poor Lizzie would not bear the hard life any longer, and—left me. Do not ask me what has become of her; I dare not think. I have seen her once since; God grant I may never see her again. And I myself? You see me; I am alive, and that is all. I can no longer earn enough to live on; perate tonight and came out, why and where I am getting weak, I am afraid. I grew des—I did not know. There is my tale. You see you cannot help me. It was kind of you to think of helping me. It is getting late, I am afraid. Good night.”

She turned quickly round, wishing to hide

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the tears that were again coming into her eyes, and in another moment would have been gone; but Vincent, hastening after her, again compelled her to stay.

"But I can help you; Miss Lindon, I must help you."

His first impulse had been to offer her money, but he at once saw how unwelcome such an offer would be, how impossible to make her accept of it. Instead of that he proposed to find her work, to provide her sewing enough to enable her to make a living. The offer was at once thankfully accepted.

"And," said Vincent, as they were parting, "I may see you again, I may come and see you?"

"Thank you," she replied, firmly but modestly, "I had rather you did not. I must work all my time. You are very kind to get me work."

And so they parted.

Leonard Vincent was as good as his promise with regard to finding Laura work,

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but, after a few weeks, he proved disobedient to her wish that he was not to visit her. In time she grew more cheerful, and more willing to talk freely, though it was long before she lost, when speaking to her friend, the air of reserve which was the result of her natural pride. At last Vincent, obedient to an impulse which had now become too powerful for restraint, told Laura that he loved her, that he wished to make her his wife. He already knew that she was not indifferent to him, but he little knew of the consuming passion which, kindled at first by gratitude, now burnt fiercely in her heart; of the efforts it had long cost her to choke ardent affection 'neath the guise of cold respect. Laura's emotions were powerful, but her self-command still remained more powerful; and now, whilst she modestly confessed her love, she urgently besought her lover to reflect before he committed what might prove an irreparable error. But Leonard was heedless of consequences. In the warmth of the moment he sought an

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interview with his father, and desired him to sanction his marriage with Laura, at the same time giving a truthful account of her life and present condition.

Old Mr. Vincent was a retired cotton-spinner. His immense wealth had been accumulated by his life-long devotion to business; and his nature, of course material to begin with, was now rendered more selfish and intolerant by the addition of a vulgar pride. Furious at first when he heard his son's announcement; second thought induced him to rely upon low cunning as a better instrument against his son, who was himself proud, but not ignobly so. He pretended to consent to the match on one condition: that Leonard should first enable himself to support a wife by his own exertions, independent of any hopes he might entertain of settlement from his father.

Laura had awaited the issue of the conference with outward calmness, but, in reality, in suspense that amounted to agony.

"You have asked?" she exclaimed hastily,

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as her lover came to see her immediately after receiving his answer.

"All is well, dearest," he replied. "But we are both too young as yet. Let us be faithful to each other. Till our marriage you will live at my home and my parents will care for you. I am going to spend a year abroad."

Laura strove bravely with her emotions and tried to appear glad. In another week she was living under Mr. Vincent's roof, and Leonard had sailed for America.

II.

TWO YEARS have passed, and we meet with Leonard Vincent, this time not in the Old, but in New, England. The school-year is just at an end, the summer vacation is about to commence, and to-day all the scholars are assembled to show by an exhibition the results of their own work and that of their teachers, of whom our friend is one. The members of the graduating-class are here in all their

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glory; the boys, as is usual with boys on such occasions, well-dressed but awkward; the girls resplendent in the combined charms of nature and of art—a perfect bouquet of rich buds just breaking into the full blow of womanhood. Let us notice Minnie Warren, the young lady whose place is at the head of this class. She is not tall, but her figure is perfect in symmetry; Minnie is grace itself, from the little slipper with the blue bow which now and then peeps from beneath the muslin, to the simple but jaunty coil of rich brown hair that sits on the back of her head. The face, usually wreathed in the most attractive smiles, but now demure-looking from a sense of being regarded by the whole assembly, is not handsome, but is incontestably pretty. Her cheeks, perhaps a trifle redder than on ordinary occasions, are soft and smooth as the petals of a flower, and her lips—description fails. On Minnie all eyes are fixed, and, among them, those of her teacher, Leonard Vincent; but does not the gleam of joy in the eyes of the latter indicate

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more than the justifiable pride of one who had helped to make Minnie's mind rich in learning and worthily corresponding to a face so rich in beauty?

What has time brought about in the two years that have passed? Leonard Vincent never forgot his promise to Laura, but for many weeks wrote regular and loving letters, to which his betrothed replied in lines that showed the sincerity of her love and the nobility of her nature. Then all at once, she ceased to write, and the cause was explained by a letter which Leonard shortly after received from his father, wherein it was stated, with much attempt at sympathy and overstrained expressions of regret, that Laura had been taken sick of fever suddenly, and very shortly after had died.

Must it be confessed that Leonard experienced no keen sorrow at this sudden news? He was shocked; but he did not experience a lover's grief. His nature would never have allowed him to prove false to Laura as long as he knew her living in the constant hope of

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becoming his wife; but absence and reflection had so far altered his feelings as to enable him to bear her loss with equanimity. The truth was that from the first his love had contained far more of mere compassion and self-complacency than he could imagine or would have been willing to admit. Very soon after leaving England he had confessed to himself the wish that Laura had been intellectually more of a companion for him. His soul was not great enough to be contented with simple devotion in the woman who was to be his wife, and his imperfect sympathies required more points of contact. Thus it was that very soon after receiving the letter which told him of Laura's death he had consciously proceeded to foster a new attachment, the seeds of which had already been sown. Without being handsome, or in any sense a lady-killer, Vincent had yet, for those who knew him well, a decidedly pleasing appearance, which joined to a lively and agreeable manner, considerable powers, and the polish of culture, made

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him decidedly pleasing and attractive. His cheerful equability of temper had speedily resigned him to the lot his father imposed upon him, and he had very soon become a decided favorite with the pupils, especially the young ladies.

The exhibition was considered a great success. The singing, the declamations, the recitations, were voted delightful by the assembly of parents and friends. At last all was over, the people were dispersing, and Vincent was engaged in making a few last arrangements in his own room, when there came a knock at his door, and, without waiting for an invitation, Miss Warren walked in.

"Well, Mr. Vincent are you satisfied now?"

"Decidedly, Miss Warren; and above all with you. You were charming."

Minnie appeared to take no notice of the compliment, but went on in her usual voluble manner.

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"Oh, Mr. Vincent, did you notice Grace Wilson, how she spoke her piece? It was just elegant!"

"No doubt; but there was some one else who spoke a piece; and she was more than 'just elegant.'"

Minnie shook her head with a pretty air of mock impatience.

"How provoking you are! I really don't wish for any compliments, s—; no; I was just going to call you 'sir,' but I'm not a schoolgirl now, and I shan't call you 'sir' any longer."

"Very well, Miss Warren; then in revenge I shall deprive you of your title, and henceforth call you 'Minnie.'"

Minnie reddened slightly, and turned round to look out of the window. But directly afterwards she turned to face Vincent again.

"Shall you be here again next term, Mr. Vincent?"

"I am very uncertain. It depends greatly upon circumstances."

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Minnie laughed merrily, and laid her hand upon the door as if about to leave the room.

"That is one of your provokingly indefinite philosophical phrases. I suppose time will show. But, really, all the people have left. I must be quick and get home. Good-by."

She opened the door and pretended that she was off in a great hurry. Leonard appeared for a moment undecided; then he took a step towards her.

"Minnie!"

She stopped, and, turning around with an assumed air of indifference, asked:

"Did you speak, sir?"

"So you are going off without wishing me a happy vacation? I am surprised at you, Miss Warren."

"I thought you were not going to call me 'Miss' any longer," she replied, with a merchant air.

"Oh, I forgot. Have you nothing to say but a cold 'good-by,' Minnie, now that we are seeing each other for the last time?"

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Minnie exhibited a scarcely-perceptible start at this announcement.

"Oh, I am not going away," she replied, perhaps a trifle more earnestly than the occasion seemed to warrant. "I shall be at home when school begins again."

"But I think it very likely that I shall not. I think I shall go to England for good. I have been here long enough."

"So you are tired of us Americans already? Ah, well, we are stupid people, I suppose. Good-by, then."

She held out her delicate white hand, and it trembled just a little. Leonard took it, raised it to his lips, and then gently let it go. Minnie laughed her ordinary gay laugh.

"Is that how Englishmen say good-by? What a knightly lot of people you must be!"

"No," replied Leonard, earnestly, drawing nearer to Minnie, "that is not how we say good-by. We only do that when we mean that we are never going to say good-by."

"Oh, indeed! Then I must leave you, I

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suppose, without exchanging the usual civilities!"

She turned and moved very slowly towards the door. Vincent reached her side with a single step, and took her hand in his own. She turned around, and the blossoms in her cheeks deepened in color as she looked in his face, unable to say anything.

"Minnie," said Leonard, in a low, earnest tone, "you understand me, though you pretend not to. May I always keep this hand?"

She looked down at the ground, a most unusual thing with her, and replied somewhat indistinctly:

"Really, that would be asking me to stand here too long."

"It is a very pretty hand. May I kiss it again?"

Minnie gave no reply. He took the silence for consent.

"Those are very pretty lips, Minnie. May I kiss them?"

The question was asked in a tone little above a whisper. The reply was not in

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words, but the look that was in her hazel eyes as she raised her face to his told him that Minnie Warren, with all her beauty and roguishness, was his own.

And so he did not leave America. He wrote to his father telling him that he had won a wife who belonged to a family that the old cotton-spinner had no reason to be ashamed of as his relations; in reply, his father opened, if not his heart, at all events his pocket-book, to his no longer wayward son. Mr. Vincent, for reasons of his own, had no particular wish that Leonard should return to England, and experienced no great sorrow when he was told that his son desired, for some time at least, to continue to reside in America.

III.

And Laura Lindon? Was she really dead, as Leonard had heard from his father? No; it was but a cruel scheme invented by the purse-proud old man to frustrate a marriage in which he could see nothing but disgrace

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to himself and to his son. At the same time that he had written to Leonard to tell him that Laura was dead he had been to a man skilled in such matters and got him to forge a letter from Leonard, which said that he had for some time felt how unfitted he and Laura were for each other, owing to the latter's lack of education; that he had hitherto been silent on the matter, endeavoring to overcome his doubts; but that he at last felt it to be his duty to free Laura from her engagement, and hoped that she would ere long find a husband better suited to her. At the same time he stated that he had left his former residence, and thought it better that she should not know his present address. The forgery was so skillful, the awkward appearance of the letter so exactly like those she had hitherto received, that the poor girl never for a moment suspected any deception, all the less because Mr. Vincent, with a cunning foresight, had always behaved to her with the utmost apparent kindness, and had openly professed himself anx-

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ious for the union of the two lovers as soon as Leonard should have attained his majority. The result was exactly what he had foreseen. Laura, after passing some days in an agony of grief, had suddenly asked Mr. Vincent if he would provide her with sufficient money to pay her passage to America, and, upon his refusal, had disappeared from the house during the night, and never been heard of since. The old man, confident of the perfect success of his stratagem, rubbed his hands in satisfaction, and turned his attention to other matters.

Meanwhile all was peace and comfort in the little home in New England over which Minnie Warren, now Mrs. Vincent, presided with all her natty ways. Minnie, herself scrupulously neat and careful of her appearance, was resolved that everything and everybody about her should be no less irreproachable, and he would indeed have been a happy man whose wife was a better housekeeper. Leonard passed his days in elegant leisure, his easy nature flattered to the ex-

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treme by the affectionate attentions of his excellent little wife. It is true that he did occasionally revert in thought to his old home, and to the memory of her whom he had once fancied so dear to him; but his easy-going philosophy was at no loss to provide consolation for irremediable events; and it is probable that, in such moments of reflection, his train of thought resulted in conclusions not so very far removed from those which his father had made use of to disappoint poor Laura's hopes.

It was an afternoon in January. New England weather had of late been doing its best to maintain its reputation for variability, and, whilst the streets were still wet with the recent rain, the still heavy sky, which was striving to stint the daylight of a few hours of existence, gave unmistakable warning of a coming snowstorm. Mrs. Vincent, who abhorred gloom of every kind, took the opportunity to pull down the blinds and light up the chandelier at an unusually early hour.

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"Now, Leonard," said the charming little woman, as she sat down on a low stool at her husband's feet and crossed her hands over his knees, "do, pray, put aside that book and let me have a little of your society."

Leonard had been somewhat silent all day, an unusual thing for him, and had buried himself since morning in the depths of some metaphysical novel. Doubtless, as Mrs. Vincent had suggested, the weather had something to do with it. He now threw aside his book, stretched himself, and yawned somewhat drearily.

"Well, Min," he replied, "to tell you the truth, I feel rather out of sorts."

Then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he stood up and took up the newspaper that lay on the floor beside him. Turning to the advertisements of amusements he read half aloud:

"Globe Theatre: Last night of 'The Wild Man of the Prairie,'—bosh! Variety Theatre: 'Jem Thompson's Marvelous Impersonations; Miss Williams with her favorite song

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—pshaw! Theatre Comique: Opera-Bouffe, —ah, that's better. 'La Fille de Madame Angot.' What do you say, Minnie! Let us have an evening at the theatre."

Minnie, who had a New England girl's delight in the theatre, put on a demure look, but didn't seem unfavorable.

"Well, Leonard, it certainly is some time since we have been, and——"

"Very well, then," broke in her husband. "Let's get supper over. I'll just go order a hack."

In due time arrangements were completed, the hack arrived, and before very long the pair were comfortably seated directly in front of the stage, wishing for the curtain to rise. In the meantime Minnie became the unconscious focus of many opera-glasses, as was usually the case when she appeared in public. Leonard had gradually been regaining his even flow of spirits, and by the time that the orchestra commenced with the well-known delightful airs he was quite ready to enjoy to its full the peculiar pleasure of the

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entertainment. All went splendidly. The prima donna was a noted "star," and entranced the house with her singing. Minnie was totally absorbed in the performance, when she suddenly felt her husband start. At the same time she noticed a disturbance on the stage. What was the matter? Oh, it was nothing, said the people next to her; only one of the chorus who had fainted. Look, they were carrying her off the stage. Minnie looked at Leonard and saw a pale, anxious look on his face that she had never before seen there. Thinking nothing of the slight confusion before her, she laid her hand on her husband's arm:

"What is the matter with you, Leonard?" she whispered. "Don't you feel well?"

"Nothing, nothing," he replied, hastily. "It was only for the moment. And yet,—would you mind if we left the theatre?"

"Let us go at once. Give me my shawl."

They rose from their places and left the theatre, the performance going on as if nothing had happened to disturb it. When they

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were outside Vincent seemed to alter his mind.

"Minnie," he said, his voice trembling slightly, "would you mind going home alone? It was foolish to disturb your enjoyment. I feel all right now; but it is hardly worth while going back, and I think I will take the opportunity of going to see a friend in town whom I have often promised to call on."

At first she remonstrated, but at length, as Leonard began to show signs of irritation, she pressed him no further, and left him to return home.

Hitherto the threatened snow-storm had held back, but now white specks began to dot the air, falling steadily. Leonard showed no intention of going to visit his friend, but paced hurriedly up and down in front of the theatre, repeatedly looking at his watch. Old memories were at work within his mind, and his knit brows and anxious look indicated the working of some strong emotion. At length 10 o'clock struck, and the people be-

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gan to swarm out of the theatre. Hastily walking down a narrow, gloomy street that led alongside of the house, he stopped before the stage-door, as if awaiting some one. Shortly the door opened, and, one after another, muffled forms appeared. He peered into their faces as they passed, but seemed to recognize none, till at length a tall female figure came down the steps, and, after hesitating a moment, walked down the dark street. Leonard could not see the face, but the walk of the figure he could not mistake. With light, quick steps on the new-fallen snow he followed her, and, when they had come to a spot slightly illuminated by a street-lamp, he stepped up quite close to her and touched her. She turned round hurriedly, gazed eagerly in his face, and then threw her arms around his neck and sobbed convulsively.

“I saw you,—I knew you at once! It was wrong,—it was unkind of you! But now I have found you again, I can forgive everything.”

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Her incoherent sentences were spoken as quickly as her sobs would permit, and till she had ceased Leonard could not speak a word. Then he gently removed her arms from his neck, and as she gazed eagerly at him she saw his face was ghastly pale. He spoke slowly and as if with difficulty.

"Laura, you must not think of me. We must not see each other again. She you saw with me was my wife."

He paused. The light of half reproach, half joy that had shone from her eyes was suddenly changed into a wild glare of madness. She strove to speak but could not. Leonard, terrified at her look, went on in humbling tones.

"Listen to me, Laura. It is not my fault. They told me you were—dead."

She caught both his hands lightly in her own, and whispered rather than spoke.

"It does not matter. It does not matter. They were right,—I was dead!"

Then with a powerful effort she seemed to gain command over herself and spoke

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calmly, but reproachfully, "And you would leave me at once,—without talking over old times with me? I have so much to tell you. Come; at least you will come to my house and sit one hour with me and talk."

He could not resist her voice, but he answered nothing. She turned quickly round and led the way, he following her with difficulty. The snow was now descending heavily and the storm-wind began to whistle through the narrow streets and heap up the white drifts against the houses. Leonard knew not the direction in which they were going; the snow and sleet in his face scarcely allowed him to keep in sight of the tall, dark figure that seemed almost to fly before him. Now and then she turned round to see that he still followed her, and each time beckoned to him to go faster. They had been walking thus for some time when Leonard raised his eyes to see where they were going. They had got out of the regular streets and he could only see a few houses around him. The storm was raging fearfully and the

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snow was already so deep as to render walking difficult. He stopped and called to her.

"Laura I cannot go further; where do you live?"

She did not turn round to him, only beckoned with her hand, and cried, "Only a little further."

Leonard could not see at all where he was. In the utmost perplexity he still followed. Finally they came to the top of a short flight of steps, below which he could discern a long, level, white track. They both stopped at the same moment. Leonard strained his eyes through the storm and the dark, and then suddenly drew back.

"Laura! where are you going? Oh, God; it is the river!"

She answered with a wild shriek of laughter, clasped him fiercely round the neck, and dragged him down the steps. In vain he tried to struggle, for she was nerved with the strength of frenzy. There was a plunge, a cracking as the thin layer of ice gave way, a splashing of the water on the lowest step,

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and then all was still. The thick snow soon made the river once more a smooth white surface, and the hidden depths bore witness to the edict that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.

Gretchen

Paul Mansfield was a young art-student living in Paris. Endowed with fair abilities and an enthusiastic admiration of the beautiful, in whatever shape it presented itself to his eyes, he might have worked hard and won himself a name, had it not been for one obstacle. Paul had the misfortune to be born rich. He knew very well that he lay under no necessity of earning his living, and consequently rather shirked those unpleasant duties of his art which are indispensable to the attainment of pre-eminence, but which for their mastery require the incentives either of fervent genius, or, what is no less powerful, an empty pocket. To be sure, he would be an artist; what better or more natural way was there of passing his time. His father had been a highly-successful portrait-painter, and from his earliest days Paul had breathed the atmosphere of studios. Indeed, if the truth must be told, he owed his Chris-

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tian name, not to any extraordinary reverence entertained by his parents for the Apostle Paul, but to the fact that it had been borne by the great Rubens; no doubt he would have been called Peter also had the name been a trifle more euphonious. The young man was not unpleasantly presumptuous in his disposition, but he certainly regarded himself as one of those who have the happiness to excite the smiles of Fortune; who, it must be confessed, showed herself in his case singularly free from jealousy, considering the number of young ladies from whom Paul prided himself on receiving similar signs of approbation. He passed his days in the most agreeable manner; now amusing himself for a few hours in his elegant atelier, now visiting his numerous friends and acquaintances; doing his best, in short, to enjoy to the full the delights of the beautiful city.

One morning, strolling along together with a friend and enjoying the sunshine, he turned into a well-known picture-dealer's to

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examine the latest additions to the stock. As the two walked arm-in-arm round the room Paul amused himself by indulging in the severest criticism on every new picture. Criticism was a delightful occupation for him; so very easy, so thoroughly congenial; he felt that he was born to be a great art-critic. In this way they came before a small picture entitled "Gretchen at the Spinning-Wheel." Both stood silent and gazed at it. Paul's friend turned in expectation of the criticism, but none came; surprise and admiration were alone expressed in the young painter's eyes. And indeed the picture disarmd criticism. From beneath the beautiful dark lashes which seemed to droop with the burden of a tear, looked forth a pair of eyes that spoke the very poetry of hopeless passion. All that is sweetest in womanly beauty, all that is tenderest in womanly love, all the holiness of innocence, and the pathos of humility shone in that perfect face, and one could almost hear the music that breathed from the slightly-parted lips. When Paul

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recovered from his astonishment his ecstasy was unbounded.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed to his friend, “the man who painted that is a genius; and the woman who sat for the model—I’m sure it’s a portrait—is an angel, sir, an angel! Why don’t you speak, man? I tell you I had rather own that picture than all the rest in the place. What eyes! What lips! What a rich beauty there is about the hair,—look at the shadow of that tress on the neck! Pshaw! poetry is nothing to painting. Only the privileged few can form to themselves an image of Gretchen from the poem; but here, here she is made visible alike to all, the greatest blockhead would sigh when he looked at this picture! Hollo! I say, who is the painter of this?”

The somewhat unceremonious query was addressed in French to the proprietor, who happened to be standing not far away, and who now came up rubbing his hands.

“That, Monsieur, is—let me see; yes, by a young man of the name of Rossignol.”

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"Rossignol!" exclaimed Paul with a laugh, and he turned to his friend; "What a poetical name."

"I think, Monsieur," said the proprietor in English, "that this is what one calls a name of war; n'est ce pas? Nom de guerre, as we say."

"Just so," replied Paul; "I should like to know him. What is the price of the picture?"

A rather high figure was named, and Paul remained for a moment in thought.

"Confound it, it's a good deal to pay; yet," glancing once more at the picture, "I **must** have it. Here you are. Send it, if you please, to that address."

And Paul handed over the price of the picture together with his card; then, after gazing in rapture a moment longer, turned away with a sigh of relief. The two left the room at once. "After that," Paul said, "it is impossible to look at anything else; ceta vu sans dire."

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If it is possible for a man to become a sort of second Pygmalion and fall in love with a picture, it is certain that Paul Mansfield was in love with "Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel." For many days after receiving it and installing it in the best place the walls of his studio afforded, he did little but stand before it and gaze, gaze in rapture till the lovely form seemed to him to stir in the frame. Then he began to copy it, and never had he worked so assiduously in his life as he had at this picture. Twice he began it, and twice, disgusted with his effort, he threw aside his canvas and commenced anew. The third he thought a little better. Those eyes,—it is a desperate attempt to approach their magic fascination; it seemed as impossible to reproduce them as it would be to create real eyes; and yet he strove with all his skill to catch the secret of their beauty, and to one less bent on perfection would have appeared successful. Paul's friends were astonished and amused at his infatuation. None of them knew the artist; but then Paul

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only associated with painters of good social position and elegant dilettantes — it was quite possible that this was the work of some struggling genius yet unknown. Every morning when the young men met together Paul was invariably greeted with the question: "And your Gretchen, how is she?" At which they would all laugh, but Paul shook his head and exclaimed: "I would give a trifle to know the model who sat for that picture." "Pooh, my good fellow!" some one would cry, "that is no woman; that was drawn from the imagination, from a cloud Juno." "Juno! Pshaw!" replied Paul, "that is Gretchen, I tell you; none of your cow-eyed divinities, but flesh and blood. What will you bet that I don't discover her some day here in Paris?"

"You know my 'Venus Anadyomene,' cried one, "I've just finished it; a jewel of a picture. I'll bet you that against your 'Gretchen' that you don't discover her in two months."

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"No, no," said Paul, shaking his head, "against my copy of the picture, if you like; but not the original."

"Done," cried the other; and the bet was made, to the great amusement of the whole company.

After this Paul set to work in earnest to try and discover the original Gretchen; for he felt convinced that the picture he had bought must be a portrait, so strong were the marks of individuality that is presented. He visited the life-schools, he managed to get a glimpse of every professional model he heard of, but nowhere did he find any resembling Gretchen in the least. He was not very much surprised at this, for, after all, the face he sought was too refined in its lineaments and expression to belong to any ordinary woman. No, he would look elsewhere. In spite of all the banter and ridicule of his friends he continued the search at the opera, at all the theatres, at cafes, in the parks, and on the promenades; but, alas, Gretchen's face was still a thing of the imagination, a

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divine idealization, whose prototype seemed non-existent.

The two months had almost passed, and Paul was beginning to flag in his search, almost convinced that his friends were right and that the world contained no such charming creature as that he sought, when, happening one day to be walking in one of the suburbs of the city, he saw just before him a girl looking at some pictures in a shop-window. Her back was turned to him, but his attention was at once attracted by the girl's exquisite figure, the grace of her position, and, above all, the hair that fell in such masses over her shoulders. It was just such hair as Gretchen had,—the very same tresses of glossy-brown, rippling in lights and shadows, either left to arrange itself naturally or disposed by that art which conceals art. Paul paused; he would not have been an artist otherwise. He drew near to the window, as if with the intention of looking at the pictures. She was just moving away when he ventured to turn his head and look

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at her face. Before he knew what he was doing the word "Gretchen!" escaped distinctly from his lips.

The girl turned her eyes on Paul with a look of surprise, and the young man felt the warm blood rush into his cheeks as he recognized the wonderful orbs which he had spent so much time in attempting to reproduce on canvas. It seemed to him as if she stood for several minutes looking at him. At length he became conscious of the cause of her surprise.

"Pardon me," he said in French, raising his hat with an attempt at politeness which must have been dreadfully clumsy, "I—I am in the habit of talking to myself; I—I believe I said something that—that made you think I was speaking to you."

The girl blushed and then smiled, doubtless at the ridiculous position in which our friend had put himself; then, with a very slight bow, she turned and walked away quickly. Paul stood as if suddenly awakened from a dream. Had he not seen Gretchen?

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Had not Gretchen actually smiled upon (or was it at) him? All at once he recovered his senses and looked up, just in time to see the girl's beautiful form turning round the corner of the street. Regardless of dignity he actually ran till he reached the corner; then he stopped; she was only a few yards in front of him. He followed her carefully, always keeping at a distance, till at last he saw her pause before the door of what seemed an ordinary lodging-house. A moment after, the door was opened, and she entered.

Paul's first feeling was one of delight at having succeeded in his task. That this was Gretchen he had no doubt; if it was not, there was such a marvelous resemblance between her and the picture that his friends could not but confess that he had found one who certainly might have been the model, a thing which they had declared impossible. Assuming a careless look he walked past the house and noticed the number; then he discovered the name of the street. Finally he

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noticed that there was a small restaurant exactly opposite to the house, and, crossing the street, he stepped into this and called for a glass of absinthe. After giving the waiter a pour-boire by way of propitiation, he said in a casual way: "Is that a lodging house opposite?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you happen to know any of the persons who live there?"

"Well, let me see; there's Mademoiselle Nez, the modiste——"

"A young lady?" interrupted Paul in some trepidation."

"Mais non, Monsieur!" exclaimed the waiter, elevating his hands. "I don't know Mademoiselle's age, but I dare not say she is young."

Paul smiled, and requested the young man to proceed.

"Then there is M. Dunois, the author, and M. Haricot and his wife—he's a painter——"

"And his wife!" exclaimed Paul, feeling a

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cold shiver run over him. "A painter! He is married, and lives with his wife!"

"Mais certainement, Monsieur!" cried the waiter, utterly astonished at Paul's outbreak.

The young artist said nothing more. Seizing his hat, he jumped up from his seat and rushed out of the restaurant, then got out of the street as quickly as possible, and took the nearest way home.

As soon as he reached home Paul ran to his studio and sat down before the picture of Gretchen. Then all once, as the sight of the well-known features once more brought the reality of his adventure before his mind, he began to ask himself why on earth he had behaved just now in such an extraordinary manner. So she was married; the wife of a Monsieur——, whatever was his name? He had forgotten it already; but he knew he was a painter. And what was all this to him, Paul Mansfield? Ought he not to rejoice, seeing that he had won his bet, and should now be able to laugh in his turn at his incredulous friends? And yet for some reason

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or other he felt very far from rejoicing. He felt rather as if he could have flung himself on his knees before the picture of Gretchen and begun to weep. It seemed as if he had suddenly been robbed of a treasure; as if the idol before which he had worshipped so long had been all at once taken away from him to be enjoyed by some more fortunate man. But had he not the lovely picture still, the same as ever? No; it was not the same as ever. He had seen the original; the real Gretchen, living, breathing, and O Heaven! smiling; and this dead image before him had lost all its life and half its beauty. It was all very well for Paul to try and persuade himself that his interest in the picture and the original were purely artistic; he smiled somewhat bitterly as he thought of his sudden exclamation, and the way in which the girl had regarded him. Was it possible that Gretchen was her real name? Very likely; she did not look quite like a French girl, and she had certainly started in a manner that could only be explained by the fact of her

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having a stranger suddenly pronounce her name.

Now, after all the trouble that Paul had taken to discover the original of the picture, he suddenly felt a repugnance to announcing his success to his friends, and claiming the "Venus Anadyomene." He felt that he would very much rather keep his own counsel and say nothing about his adventure; why, he did not exactly like to confess to himself; but he had a vague impression that it would be more like proclaiming a defeat than a victory. No; he would say nothing about Gretchen. The end of the month was close at hand, he would give up the copy which he had shortly ago finished, and—give up all thoughts of the original.

A fortnight passed away. How is it that we once more see Mr. Paul Mansfield approaching the door of the lodging-house opposite to the little restaurant? It seems that, for some good reason or other, he has altered his mind about forgetting the original of "Gretchen at the Spinning-Wheel."

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He knocks and a servant-girl appears.

"I believe there is an artist living here, is there not? I have forgotten his name."

"Yes, sir; there is M. Grenzel, the painter, has his atelier up-stairs."

"Grenzel—Grenzel," mutters Paul to himself; "that's a German name. I don't think that's the name the waiter fellow gave me."

"Is he the only painter living here?"

"Yes, sir."

"H'm; it must be the same. I wish to see him; will you announce me?" and he gave her his card.

In a few minutes Paul was ushered upstairs into a very small studio, which contained no furniture but what was absolutely necessary. In recompense, however, the walls were hung with several exquisite pictures, in which Paul thought he could recognize signs of the same hand that had painted "Gretchen." Yes; and there was a picture containing the very same head; there could not be the slightest doubt about it. Paul's heart beat quickly as he recognized the features.

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He had time to notice these things before the painter entered. He was quite a young man, and in appearance unmistakably German. The conversation began by Paul's introducing himself an artist.

"A short time ago I happened to buy one of your pictures," he said, "one that pleased me exceedingly; a 'Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel' and, as I was very desirous of making the acquaintance of so talented an artist, I have taken the liberty to call upon you."

"I am very happy to see you sir," replied Grenzel, in French, which had a strong German accent. "How did you discover my name?" he asked, smiling. "From M. Haricot, I suppose."

"The deuce!" thought Paul to himself, as soon as he heard the painter's question about his name; but, catching at the suggestion that followed, he bowed in silence.

"Doubtless you were amused at my assumed name, Rossignol," the painter went

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on, speaking in a frank, agreeable manner. "I don't know whether my reason for assuming it was a good one; but I imagine that pictures sell better under a French name in Paris. And so you liked my 'Gretchen'?"

"Extremely; I——"

At this moment the door opened, and who should enter but Gretchen herself. Paul rose to his feet and bowed automatically, knowing that his face was unpleasantly red, but being quite unable to prevent himself from blushing. Gretchen seemed startled to see him, but it was merely because she had thought no stranger was present; she bowed distantly, and after saying a few words to Grenzel in German, left the room.

"You see I am quite out of the district where artists generally live," went on the painter in a pleasant tone, as he resumed his seat. "I think I have a natural taste for retirement, and, above all, dislike the constant interruption one has to submit to when surrounded by acquaintances. When I came here I did not know for several days that

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there was actually another painter in the house, M. Haricot, with whom it seems you are acquainted; he also was fond of quietness, and we didn't disturb each other much. Since he left I have had as much solitude as I could desire."

A sudden thought flashed across Paul's mind. Was not Haricot the very name that the waiter had mentioned to him a fortnight ago? He felt sure it was. And could it be possible that——?

"At all events, you have the company of your wife," said Paul, rather quickly, instead of continuing his mental arguments.

"My wife, Monsieur!" exclaimed Grenzel. "I'm not married!"

"Not married!" cried Paul, jumping up from his seat; and then the next moment, finding that he had made himself ridiculous, he sat down again, very red.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, endeavoring to smile and appear at his ease; "I—I presumed, unwarrantably I confess, that the lady who just now entered was your wife."

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Grenzel laughed heartily.

"That is my sister," he said. "We live here together very pleasantly. She has excellent taste in art, and she is in reality the only critic whose opinions I listen to with regard to my pictures."

How immeasurably relieved Paul felt. The whole mystery was now clearly explained. In his hastiness, a fortnight ago, he had not allowed his friend the writer to get to the end of his list, but had assumed at once that the first painter he heard named was Gretchen's husband. It was wonderful with what vivacity he continued the conversation. Grenzel seemed to be highly pleased with his visitor; and Paul found the German a most interesting man. When they parted it was with mutual invitations for future meetings.

The next time that Paul visited Grenzel he was introduced to the latter's sister, and actually had the happiness of listening to Gretchen's charming conversation for a full hour. Her brother did not fail to relate the

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story of Paul's mistake, and that young man, it is safe to say, would have consented to make himself ridiculous ten times over for the sight of the girl's beautiful face as it glowed with that deep blush. Singularly enough, her own name was Margarete, and it was this fact that had first suggested to her brother the thought of the picture for which she sat, and in which he had, whilst producing an excellent portrait, portrayed that intensity of poetical expression which had first of all arrested Paul's attention. In the course of time Paul and Gretchen became very well acquainted indeed. The result of this acquaintance will, I think, be best shown by reproducing a little scene that took place half a year after the day on which the young painter first saw "Gretchen at the Spinning-Wheel."

A number of friends are gathered round Paul in his studio, and, by some strange chance, mention has just been made of the bet which had been lost some little time ago now.

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"It was a capital joke," exclaimed the illustrious painter of "Venus Anadyomene," explaining the story to one who was a recent comer. "Mansfield actually fell desperately in love with the picture, and bet he would find the original. Of course he failed, and so he would have done if he had hunted to this day, instead of having forgotten all about it, like a sensible chap."

"Don't be so sure of that, S," exclaimed Paul. "Suppose that I were to tell you that I was not unsuccessful after all, and that I found Gretchen?"

"My dear boy, I wouldn't believe you."

"Possibly not; and still it is true."

"That you found Gretchen?" exclaimed several voices.

"Oui Messieurs; that I found her. You know that I am going to return to England in a month. I hereby invite all of you who choose to meet me at a little dinner here on the evening before I leave; on which occasion I promise to prove to you that I have found Gretchen."

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Nothing more could be got out of Paul then; but his friends did not fail to remember his invitation. I myself happen to have been present at the little dinner, on which occasion Paul fulfilled his promise, and introduced me to Gretchen; but then he spoke of her as Mrs. Mansfield.

R. I. P.

I.

IN THE south of France, at the foot of the Pyrenees, stands, and has stood from time immemorial, a strange little market-town. The years pass over it, the inhabitants are born and die, but many a generation has gone by since an old man, entertaining his grand-children with tales of his youth, could point to any change in the town that had happened in his recollection. The crazy old houses on each side of the narrow, crooked streets lean over each other as if they were passing the hours in whispering tales of all they had seen in the years long, long ago; and even the inhabitants seem insensibly to assimilate to the old-world character of their dwellings, and spend their days in a leisurely dreaminess that but ill accords with the progressive spirit of the age they live in. As one walks along the streets, where the sound of passing wagons is seldom heard, and grass

luxuriates among the broken fragments of the old tile paving, one seems all at once to have been carried back into the Middle Ages, and it would occasion no surprise to suddenly meet two of the Monks of Rabelais or the Knights of Froissart; their presence would be entirely in keeping with the surroundings.

Remote as are the lives of these simple people from that of the busy world around them, and few as are their means of communication with even the towns nearest to them, this was of course the case to a still greater extent fifty years ago, at the time when the events about to be related took place. Summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, came and went, bringing nothing to occupy the minds of the inhabitants save the successive cares incidental to people who are tillers of the ground and keepers of flocks; and the wiseacres who nightly assembled in the tavern of honest Jacques Choutete had little to provoke oracular utterances save the price of crops or disease among the

cattle; when all at once a circumstance occurred which, at the time, stirred the stagnant pool of the rustic intellect to its very depths, and was destined to afford an inexhaustible source of conversation and wonderment for many years to come.

It was late in the evening of a glorious day of southern summer, the sky shadowing over in the east, whilst in the west still lingered the remnants of a golden twilight. Lights began to gleam here and there from the windows, and most people, safe in their own homes, were just putting their last hand to their household occupations and thinking of going to bed; but on the benches in front of Jacques Choutete's tavern still loitered a few guests, some finding their habitual thirst yet unappeased, some in the faint hope of an occurrence which might incite a renewal of the conversation. The latter tonight were not fated to be disappointed. Nearly all had risen, and were about to exchange their farewell greetings, when an unusual sound of rattling wheels reached them from the other

end of the street. The sound drew nearer, and at length, to the astonishment of all and the great joy of mine host, a carriage, evidently a hired one, pulled up in front of the tavern.

"Is the host at hand?" shouted the driver.

"Here at your service," promptly responded Jacques, running up to the door of the carriage.

"The lady wishes to be provided with a room for the night," went on the driver. "See that she is well suited." Then, as he jumped down from his seat, "I myself shall stay here overnight, friend. Let the horses be put up and cared for; and tell your ostler to have them harnessed and everything ready for my departure at 4 in the morning. I must be back at D—— by breakfast-time." Here he mentioned a small town ten miles off.

"And the lady? Does she go back with you?"

"No," replied a voice from inside the coach. "I shall remain with you some time."

Jacques, in great joy at the prospect of such a guest, who, from her manner of coming here, he doubted not would pay well, opened the carriage-door, and immediately there stepped out a tall figure, completely muffled in a long, dark cloak, the face veiled.

"My lady will find herself well pleased with her entertainment, I doubt not," said Jacques, with an innkeeper's assurance; and at the same time conducted her into the tavern, and up-stairs, where he showed her into a neat little room.

"My lady is doubtless hungry," said Jacques, vainly endeavoring to get a sight of her face as he lit two candles, "It will take but a few minutes to prepare a meal."

"Thank you; I need nothing," was the reply. "Let the driver have all he wants. I shall retire immediately; leave me."

Jacques was strongly tempted to remain longer for the sake of conversation and a chance of seeing his guest's face, but the tone of her speech left him no opportunity. She spoke like one who was accustomed to

command. Bowing low, the innkeeper left the room.

On descending to the public room below Jacques found great excitement prevailing. Not only the men who had seen the carriage arrive were there, but also a number of neighbors who had been startled by the unusual noise. Clustering around the driver they were all asking him questions at once about the new arrival. As Jacques came down-stairs the man was concluding a somewhat angry reply.

“Once again, then, I tell you I know nothing about the lady, and it’s no use asking me questions. She came up to the ‘Cloche Bleue’ at D—— in a coach, just as any other traveler might, and called for a conveyance to the next town. If she’s going to stay here some time, as she says she is, you will have a chance of satisfying your curiosity.”

At this moment Jacques entered the room. Perceiving the size of the company, he assumed an important air.

“Now, my good friends, leave the gentleman alone. Enough that the lady has come to my house and that I have just spoken to her and received all her orders. At present I have no time to talk with you; and besides it is hardly becoming to chatter over my guests so openly.” Then, turning to the driver, “Your supper, sir, will be ready for you in a few minutes. Let me show you into your room.”

So the gossips were left to themselves, but by no means paid any heed to the dignified rebuke of mine host. Here at length was a subject of open-mouthed wonder, timid suggestion, or dogmatic assertion, according to the various characters of the good people assembled. Very various were the conjectures hazarded, and the wisest did not hesitate to hint at the most noble French names that their knowledge could suggest. The incredulous laughed and affected to believe that the mysterious guest was nothing more than the daughter of some rich farmer, who had taken a fancy to see the country; and they as-

served that the morning would dispel all the mystery in the matter. The discussion was continued to a late hour, Jacques himself keeping away from his guests; doubtless because he was afraid of being pressed and forced to disclose his ignorance. At length when it was seen that nothing could be elicited from argument, save the certainty of the fact that nothing was known, the gossips began to drop off one by one, and shortly before midnight all was dark and silent in the tavern.

Shortly after sunrise next morning the inhabitants of the street were awakened by the rattling of the coach over the rugged stones on its way back to D——. If anything had been needed to renew the discussion of the preceding night, this would have afforded an occasion. Hardly had mine host appeared, smoking his morning pipe up and down before the newly-opened tavern, when he was surrounded by eager questioners. Jacques still preserved his air of dignified reticence, and the townspeople had still nothing but

conjecture wherewith to stay their mental appetite. Eyes peered curiously up at the window which Jacques pointed out as that of the room where the mysterious guest lay, but the closest scrutiny could discern nothing extraordinary. Evidently the only thing to be done was to wait till time, or the lady herself, should choose to solve the doubt.

Meantime the lady seemed in no hurry to rise. The sun had long risen when Jacques sent his little girl to knock at the chamber-door and ask if the guest was ready for breakfast, but she received no answer. Jacques consoled himself with the reflection that this long slumber was the result of weariness from travel. But now it was near noon, and still the child's knocking elicited no response. What was to be done? Afternoon came, and Jacques then thought fit to summon his neighbors to a council. The unanimous opinion was that it was the host's duty to force an entrance into the room. Curiosity (for even innkeepers are mortal) urged on Jacques the acceptance of this ad-

vice. He obeyed it; the door was forced; and Choutete with a select number of friends entered the room.

At the first sight of the spectacle that met their eyes, all drew back in amazement. There on the outside of the bed lay a woman, dressed in what appeared to be a gorgeous wedding-robe. On her wrists were bracelets of gold, set with priceless jewels, and her necklace seemed entirely made of precious stones. She wore a head-dress of simple but rich construction and a veil of exquisite fabric, thrown back from her face, rested above her head. The sight, even from a distance, was so dazzling that those who had entered the room stood still in speechless astonishment. But after a moment they drew near and looked upon her face. It was ravishingly beautiful; but the cheeks retained no trace of color, the slightly-parted lips were motionless, the high forehead was as cold and white as marble,—she was dead. The manner of her death was not long a mystery; in her right hand was tightly clasped a

small bottle, which had evidently held poison.

The discoverers looked at each other and were almost as pale as the corpse. Jacques was the first to speak. "What can this mean, neighbors?"

All shook their heads in silence. There was no time for foolish talk. After a slight pause it suddenly occurred to them to survey the room. On the bureau they discovered a large purse, filled with gold pieces, and beside it was a note written in pencil.

"My good friends: when you read this I shall be no more. Seek not to know who I was; the story would but render you unhappy. All I ask is that you will bury me just as I am. In the purse you will find money, which will pay for my funeral. The rest keep, and may it bring you a blessing."

Two days after this was celebrated the greatest funeral that the little town had ever known. Every one wished to be present at the burial of the "Princess," as they called the unknown one, and many were the tears

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shed by the simple people for the sorrowful end of the beautiful lady. Over her they placed a simple stone, raised on four supports; and on it they engraved a cross and the customary letters: R. I. P.

II.

Twelve years have gone by since the day that saw the burial of the mysterious "Princess," years that have wrought little more change in the outward appearance of the village than did the preceding twelve; what alteration there is is chiefly in the direction of decay. Among the inhabitants the change is of course, more appreciable; many are dead, many have been born, and those who were children then are men and women now; but the new generation is, in all essentials, one with the old; they have the same beliefs and disbeliefs, the same manners, the same topics of conversation.

In a community so seldom disturbed by extraordinary events it is natural that, when by chance such a one does occur, its memory

will long continue fresh; and when, by the ultimate satisfaction or weariness of human curiosity, it ceases to possess the charm of novelty, it will yet hold its place as one of those traditions handed down as heirlooms from generation to generation. So it was with the mystery of the beautiful lady. The village wisecracks had long ago taxed their utmost ingenuity in the attempt to solve the riddle, but in vain; and now it remains as a story to be told to wondering groups of children, and a never-failing source of self-satisfaction and importance to those who, like our friend Jacques Choutete, are able to say that they actually saw the "Princess."

The grass is green and fresh in the little burial-ground, and the leafy, spreading branches of the old trees make a cool and pleasant shade, where, in the corner least occupied by graves, a number of children are spending in noisy play the long hours of the summer afternoon. Not far from them, on one of the low stones that are placed on either side of the wooden gate which leads

out into the road, sits a young woman, now bending her head over some knitting that lies in her lap, now dropping her hands to gaze for a moment with a pleasant look at the group of children. She is the daughter of Jacques, the innkeeper, and, though she is now married and a mother, she well remembers the morning when her father sent her up-stairs to knock at the door of the lady who was found dead, and she is fond of telling about her childish fright to the little ones who are always ready to run in from the neighbors' houses to talk about Nanette, as they call her. Seated on the grass in the midst of the children who are at play is Nanette's own little girl, not 3 years old. Suddenly putting down her work by her side the mother calls to one of the noisy crowd:

Elise, dear, take up baby and bring her to me. I am afraid she will get hurt."

Elise obeys, and, taking the little child in her arms, comes up and seats it in its mother's lap. Just as she has given the child a caress and is turning to go back to her

playmates, the little gate opens, and a man enters the graveyard. His figure is tall and upright, and there is nothing about him to lead one to suppose that he is old except his face. That, however, is wrinkled and worn, and the short beard is thickly strewn with grey hairs. His eyes, too, have an anxious, tired look, and glance restlessly from one side to the other. On his back he carries a small wallet, and has a stick in his hand, though seemingly not for the sake of support.

Nanette and Elise watched the man as he walked along the path leading across the grave-yard. When he had got a short distance from them he turned off onto the grass and sat down, as if weary, upon a large, flat gravestone that stood on four supports; then took off his wallet, opened it, and began to eat some bread that he took from it. He had probably chosen this stone for a seat because it was perfectly clean; all those round about were covered with leaves, or overgrown with grass; this, however, though evidently old,

seemed well cared for by some one and kept in good order. He had hardly begun to eat when the group of children noticed him, and suddenly leaving off their game ran quickly to Nanette.

"Nanette, Nanette," they cried all together. "Look! The old man is sitting on the Princess' grave. Mightn't we tell him to go away? No one must sit there."

Nanette seemed to be in doubt for a moment.

"Well, children," she said at last, "you mustn't be rude to him, but, Elise, will you go and tell him that the people don't like that grave to be used to sit on, and that we should be glad if he would move on to another?"

Elise ran off to do her bidding. She stood before the man, and, in a somewhat timid voice, repeated Nanette's words. She was almost afraid at first as he looked at her with his sad eyes, but her fear soon vanished when she saw the smile which played about his lips when she had finished.

"And why don't they wish any one to sit here, my child?" he asked.

Elise was silent. The man rose from the stone and looked on it for the inscription. He saw nothing but a cross and the letters R. I. P.

"Who is buried here?"

The child seemed unwilling to answer.

"It is a long story," she said, after a minute's silence. "Come to Nanette; she knows all about it; she will tell you."

At these words the stranger's curiosity seemed somewhat excited. He put back the food into his wallet, and followed the child to Nanette. The young mother reddened slightly as she saw him approaching her, and rose to reply to the bow he made as he stood before her. As he spoke to her he laid his hand on Elise's brown curls.

"The little girl tells me there is some story connected with the grave I was sitting on. Will it be too much trouble for you to tell it me?"

His voice was full and rich, and Nanette looked up, surprised at the stranger's pronunciation, which, in its fineness, seemed to contrast so strangely with his appearance. She replied modestly:

"I shall be very glad to tell you the story. I suppose you are a stranger here. Every one in our village knows it quite well."

The man nodded, without speaking, and sat down on the stone opposite Nanette, who began forthwith and related the story as it has been told above. The listener at first manifested nothing more than a natural curiosity, but, as the tale progressed, he seemed to grow uneasy. Nanette was just describing the lady's gorgeous dress when he started up from the seat with an exclamation of pain. The narrator looked at him in surprise, and saw that his face was deadly pale; he seemed hardly able to stand, and, after hesitating a moment, he resumed his seat.

"Are you ill?" the young woman inquired hastily.

He did not seem to hear her question, but sat with his face covered with his hands, and a low, mourning sound escaped him. The children, who had gathered round, looked at each other frightened, and then looked inquiringly at Nanette, but no one spoke. Then all at once the stranger rose hurriedly from his seat and looked around with a strange, vacant stare, as if he had just been aroused from sleep. Then suddenly turning to Nanette, he addressed her, but so confused that his words were barely intelligible.

"Where is that inn? Where is it? Is the innkeeper living yet?"

"Jacques Choutete is still alive," replied Nanette, her voice tremulous with surprise and apprehension, "and I am his daughter."

He did not seem to heed the latter part of her sentence, but, stepping up close to her and grasping her arm so tight that she could hardly refrain from uttering a cry, he whispered hoarsely, "Lead me there!"

Nanette obeyed, and began to walk hastily in the direction of the inn; the children fol-

lowing the two, looking up fearfully at the strange man and now and then appealingly at Nanette, as if asking her whether they should run and bring some one to her aid. They gained the inn and found old Jacques in his usual place, smoking on the bench before the door. He rose to meet the party, thinking at first that his daughter was bringing a guest to his house.

"Father," said Nanette, "the gentleman wishes to speak to you"; then, as if relieved from a painful situation, she turned round to the group of boys and girls, and, bidding them be off to their play, herself went towards her own house, taking the baby with her.

"Can I speak to you in private?" said the stranger.

"Certainly, sir"; and Jacques turned round to enter the house with an air indicating at once personal dignity and conscious rectitude. The two sat down together in a little parlor, and the stranger, refusing Jacques' offer of refreshment, at once referred to the

story he had just heard narrated and asked concerning its truth. The innkeeper was surprised at his guest's evident excitement, but, glad of an opportunity for display, he began, and, with an important air, detailed every circumstance of the mysterious affair.

"And this was twelve years ago?" asked the man.

"Twelve years ago precisely. My Nanette was then a bit of a girl 8 years old, and now she is 20."

"And you buried her in all her clothes? I must have the grave opened!"

Jacques surveyed the man in open-mouthed astonishment; it was even with awe that he heard such an astonishing speech so decisively delivered. They faced each other for a moment in silence; then the stranger asked anxiously, "Did you keep nothing of hers?"

There was no resisting the man's manner. Jacques, after reflecting a moment, replied, "Yes, one thing—but only to remind us of her, not for its value. On her hands were two rings; we took one."

"Let me see it," was the instant reply. Old Jacques was so taken aback by the man's strange conduct that he never thought of resenting the commanding tone in which he spoke. In a perfect bewilderment he left the room, and in a moment returned with a small ring, in which was set a plain stone, with a monogram delicately carved upon it. The man took it in his hand, trembling violently, and for a moment regarded it closely. Then, still holding the ring, he suddenly covered his face with his hands and burst into tears.

III.

Honest Jacques' bewilderment had now reached its climax, and it was some minutes before he recovered himself sufficiently to observe that he had dropped his pipe. This trivial circumstance probably saved the worthy man's reason, inasmuch as it provided a means of distracting his attention from the stranger, and thus relieving his overwrought mind. Bending with difficulty

—for with age had come increasing corpulency, he picked up the fragments with a rueful look, and, by the time he had finished contemplating his shattered treasure, the stranger had so far mastered his emotions as to be able to speak.

“You are surprised, doubtless, at my strange conduct,” he said, in a sad, low voice, “and I feel that I owe you an explanation. If you have time to listen to me, I will at once solve the mystery, and so ease your mind.”

Jacques had no urgent claims upon his time, and was delighted with the prospect of a solution of that riddle which had refused to yield to even his penetration. Sitting down on a bench, and pointing to a stool for the stranger, he remained in expectation, being careful by this time, however, to avoid outside sign of curiosity inconsistent with his dignity. After a moment's silence the man began his story.

“I will not tell you my name; it is needless, and perhaps will be better if left un-

spoken. Suffice it to say that I belong to an old and noble French family, and, on my father's death, became heir to a title, and possessed of a large estate distant some fifty miles from this town. When my father was no more, the only relation remaining to me was a younger brother, in character very different from myself, inasmuch as he was overbearingly proud and ambitious. My father had often desired me to marry, but I was devoted to study, and felt no inclination to incur the cares and responsibilities consequent upon the possession of a wife and family. When I succeeded to my father's name I was already close upon 30 years old, and, as I continued my studious habits and lived in almost total retirement from the world, there was every prospect that I should die without heirs and leave the title and estate to my brother, a prospect which rejoiced him exceedingly. Judge of his anger then, when, all of a sudden, I announced to him my intention of taking a wife. The circumstances which so unex-

pectedly induced me to adopt such a novel resolution was this. It was frequently my custom to take long and solitary walks in the woods surrounding my estate. Sometimes I would even be absent for days, all day giving myself up to the careless enjoyment of nature and my own reflections, and trusting at night to arrive at some inn, or, failing that, the dwelling of some peasant who would be willing, in return for payment, to afford me shelter. It happened one day that I had roamed farther than usual, and, when towards sunset I began to look around me for a place to pass the night, I found that I was utterly at a loss as to my whereabouts. This, however, did not trouble me much; I kept on my way, and before long arrived at a little cottage standing by the side of the road, and seemingly at some distance from any other habitation. The sun had just set, and I did not scruple to enter the cottage, hoping to be allowed to remain there that night. I walked in without ceremony, but was somewhat abashed

on discovering the only occupant of the room to be a young girl, who appeared to be engaged in preparing the evening meal. She was very simply dressed, her dress, if anything, being plainer than that of the ordinary peasant girl; but, when she turned round on hearing my footsteps and showed me her face, I thought I had never beheld any one half so beautiful—‘Is that you, father?’ she said, as she turned round; then, when she saw a stranger before her, she corrected herself instantly and with the most charming smile, showing not the slightest trace of rustic awkwardness or embarrassment. ‘Pardon me,’ she said, ‘I was expecting my father, and thought I heard his footstep. Is it him you seek?’ I explained the occasion of my disturbing her, and asked her permission to remain there till her father arrived. This she readily granted; I sat down, and she went on with her work. I could not take my eyes from her as she moved from one side of the room to the other and busied herself in the cooking of

something that was over the fire; every movement was grace itself, and the words she from time to time addressed to me made me rather imagine myself in a countess' drawing-room than in a peasant's kitchen. In short, I was entranced, and my heart, which I had hitherto considered proof against woman's charm, became instantly filled with longings I had never known. 'Here,' I thought to myself, 'I have at length found a woman who is worthy of being loved,' and, before I had been in her presence a quarter of an hour, I had resolved that, if she were willing, I would make her my wife. You will think my resolution strangely romantic, and, for one in my position, perhaps indiscreet; but you must know that I had always prided myself on my opposition to the conventionalities of life so closely adhered to by those of my rank, and my sanguine disposition led me always to expect the best results from those acts which proceeded from my unfettered judgment.

"Before long the father came in. He was

a stout, hearty-looking man, with genial countenance, and was, as I soon discovered, possessed of a better intellect than is usually found among peasants. He received me kindly, and, on learning that I was a belated traveler, did not hesitate to offer me a supper and a bed for the night, setting aside somewhat proudly my promise of payment, and saying that he did not keep an inn. I was weary with my day's walk and had no fault to find with the entertainment that was provided; indeed, so pleased was I with my new friends, that I should have relished the hardiest fare if partaken with them. The peasant's daughter, whose name I found was Marianne, sat opposite to me during the meal, and it was with difficulty that I removed my eyes from her face. Only once she seemed to notice my attention; then our eyes met and the faintest possible blush rose to her cheek. We passed the evening in pleasant conversation, and I was loth to retire when, obedient to their simple manner of

life, the peasant rose at an early hour to conduct me to my room.

We rose betimes, and, after partaking with them of a single meal, I signified my intention of departing. Warned by the hint that I received on the previous evening, I did not venture to offer money to my host, but I assured them that, if I passed that way again (which, as I said to myself, I had every intention of doing very shortly), I should with great pleasure renew our acquaintance. I had acquainted them with my name, so that my friends experienced no embarrassment in their conversation with me, and they assured me that at any time I should be very welcome.

Scarcely a fortnight had passed before I repeated the visit, and was kindly received. I did not as yet venture to speak to Marianne or her father on the subject I had nearest at heart, but confined my efforts to a strengthening of the friendship and intimacy which had already sprung up between us. Several times did I visit the little cottage in the

course of the next two or three months, until at length I ventured one day, when I found myself alone with Marianne, to confess to her the cause that so often brought me there. She had already discovered it, and did not hesitate to confess, though it was with all modesty, that I had completely won her heart. My joy at this was unbounded, and I told her my intention immediately to inform her father of what has passed between us, and ask him to give me Marianne as my wife. I went out to meet him as he was returning from his work, and laid the matter at once before him. He seemed at first much surprised, and, when in hopes of the more easily gaining his assent, I told him my name and rank, he firmly though respectfully refused. I returned with him to the cottage, all the way urging him to alter his decision. When we arrived there Marianne was informed of her father's refusal, and, when she heard who I was, herself tried to dissuade me from persisting in my wish to make her my wife, though I could see what pain it cost her.

However, I was importunate; and ultimately, after representing that my title was in reality nothing to me, that I lived in perfect privacy, and that I was determined never to marry if I lost Marianne, I succeeded in gaining a reluctant consent.

When I informed my brother of my approaching marriage I could easily see how ill-pleased he was with the news—but little imagined to what extremities his ambition would drive him. The marriage was to be perfectly private, my brother and Marianne's father being the only witnesses. How shall I describe to you that dreadful night? I shudder whenever I recall it, and I never thought to have to relate it to another. I will be as brief as possible. Though the wedding was so quiet I had insisted on Marianne being dressed as became my bride, and it was with rapture that I beheld her as she walked with me to the altar like a Princess. We were married, and I thought I had reached my highest happiness, when, in reality, I was about to experience the bitterest woe. My

brother, determined to avert the danger which threatened his ambition, had laid a cruel plot against me; and it succeeded. One of my servants—she confessed the whole plot to me later—was gained over by bribes to take Marianne apart on the night of our wedding and feign to her that she herself was my wife; that I had told her of my new marriage and obtained her silence by threats; and that, in revenge, she had now disclosed the secret. My brother, in framing the plot, had reckoned on Marianne's simplicity, and the poor girl never doubted but what this horrible tale was true. She fled at once. I very soon discovered her absence, and sought her all night—but in vain. My agony was such that the next day I fell into a raging fever. My life was despaired of, and it was with regret that I found myself eventually recovering. However, I still cherished some hopes of regaining my wife, and, on getting back my strength, immediately set out to seek for her. My inquiries were useless, and, in despair, I quitted the country, careless of

all I left behind and of what life I should in future lead. It is unnecessary to tell you more—ever since I have been a vagabond on the face of the earth. On returning to France a month ago I heard that my brother now holds my title and property—doubtless happy in the success of his ambition. You will think me mad; another would not have been so precipitate; would have acted more wisely, you will say. Perhaps so; I have always differed from others in my ways, and, I thank God, in my wishes.”

The stranger ceased, and rose to depart. Once more he passed through the little grave-yard, and once more he paused at the stone of the “Princess.” Then, with a sigh, he turned away, and was no more heard of.

Too Dearly Bought

ALL day long, and day after day, Tim Ridley stitched and patched, and plied his awl and hammer, for Tim was a cobbler by trade. Long years ago, Tim, following the impulse of youth, had shouldered his little bundle and left his native village to seek his fortune in the City of London; and if he had failed to find it, in the sense in which it then presented itself to his unsophisticated mind, he had at all events never known what it was to want a meal—a measure of success perfectly adequate to the maturer fancies of his later years. The sixty years that lay behind him had silvered his hair and drawn deep wrinkles on his forehead, and his step was far from firm. Indeed, to look at him, one would have taken Tim for a much older man than he really was; for not only had time dealt its blows, but for many

T O O D E A R L Y B O U G H T

years the hand of grief had lain heavily upon the once stalwart man and bowed his frame. Shortly after coming to London he had fallen in love and married; and after twelve years his wife had died, leaving him one daughter. Ridley idolized his child, and worked night and day in the hopes of making her a happy future, only to be dashed with disappointment and sorrow. She had married early, partly against her father's will, though he could with difficulty bring himself to refuse her slightest wish, and the result had proved the truth of his foresight. The unworthy husband fell by degrees into poverty, drunkenness, and crime, and the once bright-eyed, light-hearted girl was unable to survive the grief and shame. A simple, everyday story—of little interest, alas, save to those concerned.

All that now remained to Tim from the wreck of hopes which long had made the future a bright dream was his grandchild, a little girl of 12 years. All through the long hours of work the child sat by Tim's side;

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sometimes prattling of all sorts of strange thoughts and fancies, but oftener sitting quite still and silent, her quick eye following all the motions of the old man's hand, and seeming to find a pleasure in his occupation. Lucy was small for her age, and far from strong; and indeed the case could not well be otherwise, for she had never known what it was to run about and play with other children. Ever since her mother's death, which had happened six years ago, the child had been Tim's constant companion; and, from always sitting in the gloomy workshop, her mind had developed into a strange precocity, whilst her body had from lack of exercise become weak and her natural strength had languished. But Lucy's face was of wonderful beauty—more beautiful, indeed, the old man often thought, than her mother's had been, and yet the likeness was so strong as often to draw back his mind over the gloomy interval and make him dream that he had his daughter beside him. How strange are the thoughts of a grandfather, when he turns

TOO DEARLY BOUGHT

back to the days of his own childhood, and then remembers that, since he came to manhood, he has seen a generation grow up and thrive for a while, and die; and here again is yet another, whose future will yet be bright when his eyes are forever closed!

To get to Ridley's workshop one had to descend some stone steps leading down from the level of the street, for it was situated beneath a large building that was full of business-offices. Of all the people who daily went to and from their various offices, regularly passing the entrance to the cobbler's workshop, only one ever had his attention attracted for a moment by the array of old shoes which served as a sort of trade-mark. This was Mr. Page, a white-headed old gentleman of easy deportment, whose benevolent features by no means belied the goodness of his heart. By profession he was an architect, and had his office in the second story of the building above Ridley's shop. Mr. Page was one of those rare individuals who are not only content to be charitable when a chance

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is thrown in their way, but will even go out of their way to find an opportunity of relieving the wants of others; and it was due to this spontaneous benevolence that, shortly after entering upon possession of his office, he had descended the stone steps which led to the cobbler's workshop, and, under various pretenses, had made himself acquainted with the condition of Tim's affairs. In consequence, he had since then often given the old man little jobs, procuring the custom of others when he had none of his own to give, and had in this way materially helped our friend. Tim, though he was by no means aware of the full extent of Mr. Page's good offices in his behalf, had yet a due sense of gratitude for those favors he was conscious of having received, and Lucy, shy as she naturally was, never hesitated to lift her sweet little lips to the great, rough mustache of the gentleman who had been so kind to her grandfather. For the architect had taken a great fancy to the child, and often entered the cellar, close with the smell of shoe-

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leather, to exchange a word with the beautiful and precocious little girl.

Tim often sighed as he looked at his grandchild, and if ever he wished for riches it was that he might be able to take Lucy away from the great city, where, as he too well knew, she was pining away. He had often told her of the country, describing it as well as he could, for indeed it was so long since he had himself seen it that his ideas had grown somewhat vague, and the child seemed taken up with a strange longing to visit scenes that she imagined so beautiful.

"Grandfather," she would say, looking up into the old man's face, "tell me once more about the country; about the hills and the rivers, and the meadows that are yellow with the beautiful flowers, where the cattle feed and the sun shines brightly every day. Tell me it all over again!" Then Tim would turn aside his head to wipe a tear from his cheek, and would begin and tell the best he could; and, as the child listened, her blue eyes would sparkle with delight, and at the

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end she would heave a deep sigh, and say, "Grandfather, we shall go there some day, shan't we?" "Yes, Lucy, some day," Tim replied; and when the little girl pressed him to say when they were going he would shake his head and make no answer, except sometimes to put his hand in his pocket and count the few coins that he found there.

The child's longing went to Ridley's heart, and cost him many a sad hour. She tortured his mind to try and discover some plan of gratifying his wish, but could discover none. His earnings only just covered the expenses of their family; and he knew no one who would take charge of Lucy, even had he been able and willing to send her away for a short time. One day he was puzzling as usual over the old question, and at the same time mending a pair of boots that Mr. Page had left him the day before. The result of his puzzling was as valuelless as ever, but this did not hinder his hands from producing good work, and ere he had ceased to revolve impracticable plans the boots were finished. It was

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just about noon, and, wishing to be as punctual as possible with so good a customer, he resolved to run up with the boots to Mr. Page's office above. So, telling Lucy that he would be back immediately, he left his workshop.

On arriving before the door of the architect's office Tim found it ajar. He knocked but received no answer. Resolving not to carry the boots back, he determined to walk in and deposit them where they would be seen, for he had no need to wait for his pay in order to be sure of getting it. So he walked into the office and looked round. No one was there, and, having put the boots in a conspicuous place, Tim was about to withdraw, when, as an ill luck would have it, his eye happened to fall on a number of gold pieces that lay glittering in the sunlight. He felt for a moment petrified at the sight. His brain was in a whirl. All his hopes, his longings, his vain schemings, flashed instantaneously through his mind, and at the same time came the thought that here at

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length was an opportunity of gratifying his utmost wishes. He saw Lucy's wan face lifted up to his with its appealing eye, and heard the oft-repeated question: "When shall we go there, grandfather?" uttered in heart-piercing tones. All at once a cold shudder passed over his body, and then the next minute his forehead was turning and his tongue felt parched against his palate. He could not reason; he stood a prey to quick-succeeding passions and emotions. How long he stood motionless he knew not; thinking of it afterwards, it seemed an age, though in reality it could not have been more than a minute. At length he instinctively glanced round him. No one was near. A hasty step forward, and the next moment his hands closed over the money.

Trembling with the violence of his emotions, he left the room. He had just entered the passage, and was walking hastily away, when a door opened, and Mr. Page walked out. He met Ridley with his usual good-natured smile, and asked him if he had been

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into the office. It was with the utmost effort that the cobbler forced an answer from his lips. He endeavored to say that he had just left the boots there; but his tongue seemed almost to refuse its office, and he could not hear a word he uttered. Mr. Page could not help noticing Ridley's peculiar behavior; he asked if he felt unwell. Tim had by this time, however, recovered most of his self-command, and said that he had not felt well all that day; then, repeating what he had intended to say about the boots, he turned and hurried downstairs with a muttered excuse.

On entering the workshop his first care was to dispose of the money, for he knew that the architect would at once notice his loss, and could not but suspect the thief. Lucy was sitting absorbed in her own thoughts, and did not notice her father. Going into the farthest corner of the shop, the old man eagerly counted the money, and found he had ten sovereigns; his heart beat audibly with joy. Wrapping them in a piece

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of paper, he carefully inserted the packet inside an old boot, and left it in the dark corner. Now, at all events, if he should be charged with the theft, he felt that he might boldly deny it, and trust to luck not to be discovered.

He returned to his bench and worked with the utmost perturbation. His sense of hearing seemed suddenly to have become preternaturally keen, and every passing footstep on the pavement outside he imagined to be that of some one approaching to arrest him. His grandchild spoke to him, but he heard her not; he worked on as if in a frenzy. The afternoon, however, passed and no one came. The cellar was growing darker and darker; already it was time to shut up and go home, but he dared not go out into the street yet. At length it was almost entirely dark. He knew that the architect must long ago have left his office and gone home, and, as he rose and went tremblingly to secure his treasure, he bade Lucy prepare to leave the shop. The little girl

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soon had everything put straight, and, through the darkness, they walked home hand in hand.

II.

"Lucy," said Tim as he sat at breakfast with the child on the following morning, "we shall not go to the shop to-day."

"No?" said Lucy, looking up at her grandfather with a questioning glance.

"No; we will take a holiday."

"And what shall we do, grandfather? It is not Sunday to-day; there is no church to go to. Where shall we go?"

"Suppose we go into the country," said Tim, drawing the child near to him and laying his hand on her golden curls. He trembled as he looked into the large blue eyes that were fixed on him with a look of unspeakable wonder.

"But can we go, grandfather? Do you really mean it?"

"I do, Lucy. We will go at once. We can soon pack up all our things; then we will

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go to the station, and we shall be in the country in an hour.

Lucy clapped her hands, and then threw her arms round the old man's neck and kissed him again and again. The excess of joy brought tears to her eyes, and it was a long time before she could command herself sufficiently to help Tim in making bundles of the few things they would have to take with them. Ridley thought of his workshop and all the tools and goods that he had left there, but he did not dare to return to fetch them. The child was oblivious of everything save of the prospect before them, and was too much engrossed in imagining endless delights to ask any questions about how long they were to remain away from London. In an hour everything was ready, and, Ridley carrying the larger and the child a smaller bundle, they left their humble lodgings.

After some inquiry Ridley found out the railway station that he wanted. He had resolved to go back to his native village, but he was in some fear lest the cost of the journey

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thither might be more than he could afford, for his faint recollections of the time when he first came up to London greatly exaggerated the distance he had then traveled. He was, however, soon reassured, for he found that it was not quite fifty miles off, and the expense of a third-class ticket for himself and half a ticket for the child seemed to him trifling when he reflected on the money he possessed.

Soon they were seated in the train and whirling along through the chaos of traffic that besets the entrance to the great city. Lucy hardly spoke a word. She sat and gazed in wonder through the carriage window, and now and then, when Ridley looked at her, he saw that she was leaning back with her eyes closed, as if the pressure of novelty weighed too heavily upon her mind and wearied her. Little by little the great buildings ceased to obstruct the view at each side of the line, and their place was supplied by long rows of houses, cleaner and more handsome than any that Lucy had ever seen.

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The little girl seemed by degrees to recover from her overwhelming excitement, and, taking her grandfathers' hand in her little, thin fingers, she began to talk and question eagerly. Every now and then a train would shoot rapidly by, and the child would hastily cover her face with her hands, as if in fright, and then, when the rush had passed would remove them again, and looking up into the old man's face, laugh merrily. There was more of the child about Lucy now than Tim had ever seen; she had put aside that precociously grave look and the old-fashioned manners that usually characterized her, and it rejoiced her grandfather's heart to see this involuntary outbreak of childish spirits. Ridley himself was silent, save when he opened his lips to answer a question. During the night he had not once closed his eyes, and his face had a haggard look in addition to the wonted care-worn appearance. In the silence of the night he had acted over again in thought the deed of the preceding day, but with a fuller consciousness of its sig-

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nificance than the hurried moment of its perpetration had allowed. Strange to say, it was not fear of discovery that troubled him most, but the overwhelming sense of base ingratitude. Hitherto Ridley had ever been a scrupulously honest man, not only through fear of the laws, but in consequence of moral conviction. His nature was susceptible of every good impulse, and before that day he had neevr known what it was to harbor for a moment a thought of a temptation which conflicted with his firmly rooted notions of right and wrong. For his own sake only he would never have dreamt of committing the theft, even had the opportunity and the sum to be gained been increased manifold. It was the essential goodness of his heart that, by so forcibly presenting to him the excellence of the end tot be attained, blinded him for the moment to the true nature of the means. "Nemo repente fuit turpissimus," and Ridley's action, viewed in its true light, had very much to mitigate its turpitude.

At length the travelers arrived at their

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destination. Tim's native place was a little market town, situated not far from the banks of the Thames, where that river, long before it reaches the great metropolis, is a pure and beautiful stream. On entering the village the old man's first object was, of course, to seek old acquaintances. He found that the little town had undergone considerable alteration since he knew it, forty years ago, and it was long before he found any one that remembered even his name. Tired with walking up and down the streets, and not willing to be made the object of curiosity, Ridley resolved to look out for an inn. This he very soon found. Over the door was a large sign-board whereon was painted a bear, or what was evidently intended to represent a member of that species, and underneath was the name "Anne Hart," and words intimating the right of the aforementioned lady to sell beer and spirits for consumption on the premises. Tim started as he saw the name of the hostess, and a smile rose slowly to his haggard face.

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"Here," he said, "here we will stop, Lucy. I know the woman that keeps this inn."

The child turned and, taking her grandfather's hand, went with him into the house. The barroom was empty, and the two gladly deposited their bundles on the plain table and sat down to rest on the low bench, which bore the marks of having suffered from the attacks of many generations of idle whittlers. The child was just beginning to whisper something to her grandfather when the door opened quickly and the landlady bustled in. She was a hearty, stout-looking woman, seemingly of the same age as Tim, and her somewhat florid countenance was still comely and bespoke good nature, though traces of decision, a characteristic surely permissible in landladies, were not absent.

"Morning to ye, master!" she exclaimed. "And what can I do for you?"

"Your name is Mistress Hart, isn't it?" was Tim's reply.

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"At your service," said the landlady, looking a trifle surprised.

"And it once was Anne Hebdon, wasn't it?" said Tim, smiling.

"Ye're not far wrong there, master. But how come ye to know that? Ye're not one of our parts by your talk."

"So you don't remember me?" asked Tim. "Didn't you once know one Tim Ridley?"

"God bless my soul! Tim Ridley! And so it is: well, who would'a thought it? Why, Tim, what makes you here? God bless me. I declare I never knew your face! And the little 'un; is she your child?"

"My grandchild," replied Tim.

"Bless my heart alive! Aye, aye, we're all of us getting old. But come, you musn't stay here; come into the parlor! Tim Ridley, who could believe it? Come on, my dear, give me your little hand. Eh, Mr. Ridley, great changes have happened. My poor husband's dead long since, and I think there isn't one of your folks left in the town. Eh, dear; eh, dear! Come on."

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And so the good woman rattled on unceasingly. To tell the truth, she and Tim had been great friends in the old days, and, indeed, had not been far from making a match of it. But both were then very poor, and the necessities of life had eventually proved far more important factors in the situation than romantic inclinations, which, if the truth were known, it had cost neither of them very much to subdue. Tim had gone to London and rapidly forgotten his old sweetheart, who showed herself equally independent by marrying a worthy inn-keeper. They now met merely as old friends, and without doubt were heartily glad to see each other. Arrangements were very soon made for Tim and his grandchild's remaining at the "White Bear," at all events for the present.

And now, after partaking of a hearty meal, Ridley and the child wandered forth to see what had so long been the eager desire of both. Lucy had never in her life seen a real green field, and her ecstasy was unbounded.

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It was early autumn and the trees were beginning to assume their most gorgeous robes. The red rays of the evening sun struck across the wide tracts of meadowland as the old man and child wandered along the banks of the river, beneath the long rows of the leafy chestnuts. Here and there were clusters of willows; here groups of tall rushes grew in the shallow water; and in other places the smooth, velvety turf sloped gently down to the very edge of the slow stream, which gave back like a glass the deepening tints of the sky, and, near the bank was dark with many shades of green. Now and then arose from some copse close at hand the full-throated pipe of the thrush, or a golden-beaked blackbird whirred by; the ripple of the stream, the cool, evening breeze in the branches of the chestnuts, and the distant barking of a dog or the lowing of cattle were the only other sounds. Now Tim tried in vain to enjoy the beauty that lay around him, but his mind was too ill at ease. Lucy was likewise silent, but from other causes.

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To her the open sky, the wide meadows, the glories of the evening, were a revelation, and she stood entranced. Now and then a deep sigh escaped her, and more than once her eyes glistened with tears.

Many such evenings did the two spend in rambles by the banks of the Thames. A month passed, and already much of their little stock of money had disappeared. Ridley begun seriously to think of taking up once more his old occupation, and he was the more anxious to have a source of income for Lucy's sake; for Lucy, as he could see, was far from well. The change from the city to the country had at first seemed greatly to benefit the child's health, but after the first fortnight she had begun to lose her recently-acquired spirits and visibly to grow weaker. The worthy Mistress Hart cheered up the old man with the hope of a rapid alteration—it was merely the relapse following on excessive excitement, she said, and ere long the little girl's health would begin to improve. But Tim shook his head and sighed sorrow-

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fully. He was far from being the man he had been, and he felt that the secret of his sin was crushing him day by day; and now if Lucy, his only hope—she whose welfare was the only compensation he looked to for all he had done and suffered—if Lucy was taken from him, what would the rest of life be worth? He took a cottage and once more became a cobbler. Every little luxury that he could possibly afford was procured for the child, and all that knidness and sill could suggest was done for her—but still she drooped. Day by day the little frame became more wasted. She seldom spoke, and never complained, always answering questions by saying that she was very happy, and that the country was delightful. Three months had gone by, and she was now unable to go out. Winter set in, and frost and snow covered up the landscape. Would it ever be green once more, she asked, as it used to be? Would she once more wander along the banks of the river, and pluck flowers, and listen to the pipe of the thrush and black-

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bird? Would she ever again lie on the smooth grass and bend over the edge to watch the fleecy clouds sail along in the depths of the clear, smooth water?

Christmas came and went. The first two months of the new year passed away with blustering storms, and then the heavens were calmer. Once more the fields began to grow green, and the showers of March and April called forth the buds and the blossoms of spring. Then drew on the long, warm days, and once more on the banks of the river grew the golden flowers. But, alas! no little hand trembled with delight as it clasped and plucked them, and no sweet little voice uttered the child's delight at the thousand beauties which to it were so new, so heavenly. For the hand was cold, the voice was forever mute, and the golden flowers drank the sunlight that fell upon Lucy's grave.

III.

The death of his grandchild was a terrible shock to the old man. For a long time he

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was very ill and unable to do anything, but his old friend Anne Hart saw that he did not want. During the long hours of his enforced idleness Tim's conscience gave him far more trouble than did his bodily ailments. In his recent loss his simple mind could not avoid seeing direct retribution for the sin of which he had been guilty, and he often vowed to himself that, should he recover, he would do the utmost in his power to repair the wrong.

Tim was blessed with a good constitution, and with careful tending he at length recovered, and was sufficiently strong to renew his every-day work, though the shock to his system would evidently hasten his end. It was just a year since he had left London with Lucy. Wan and haggard as his face had then been, it was now more so than ever, and his restless eyes, which glanced from side to side as if he was in continual apprehension, indicated the uneasy state of his mind. The slight remnant of natural gayety and good spirits that his long life of toil and sorrow had left him was now entirely gone. He

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shunned as much as possible the sight and the conversation of his neighbors, working unceasingly from morning to night; for the good-natured villagers, who sympathized deeply with the wornout old man, were always ready to give him employment. Had he wished, he could not have associated freely and openly with people, for the secret that weighed upon his mind made him uneasy and suspicious, and he dreaded the straightforward questioning of the honest folk.

He seldom left his cottage, except on Sunday; on which day he rose early, before the villagers were stirring, and walked to the churchyard to sit for an hour by Lucy's grave. Many a tear did the old man shed in his hopeless misery, bending over the little swell in the turf which, together with a rude headstone, marked the child's resting-place. The grass was thick with daisies all around and upon the grave, and the sight of them pleased Tim, for he knew how Lucy had loved to see them growing almost on this

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very spot, where the two had often rambled together. Here he would sit each Sunday morning in the early sunlight, till the sound of the first church-bells warned him that the people would soon be coming hither and he would no longer be alone. Then he would rise, pluck a handful of daisies, and, carrying them home, put them in water and tend them carefully till the last petal had dropped out.

For five years Tim worked away at his cobbling, stinting himself even in the necessities of life and saving aside every penny he could possibly spare. Now he had collected eight pounds, and he needed but two more. Every evening when he laid aside his work, which was always at sunset, for he would not allow himself the burning of a candle, he went to the drawer where he kept his treasure, and, drawing it forth, gloated over the heap of small coins with more pleasure than ever miser felt over a much larger sum, for Tim's pleasure had its source in nobler feelings. One dread was ever present with him, and that was lest he should die before his

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task was completed and the reparation he was toiling for performed. The thought of this was terrible to him, and he often seriously considered whether he should not impart his purpose to some friend, in order that if he suddenly died it might yet be carried out as far as possible. The only person that he could take into his confidence was the worthy landlady of the "White Bear," and yet he was withheld from asking her to become his executrix by the fear of arousing her suspicion, for of course it was impossible for him to disclose to her the whole secret.

The sixth year of his toil was now advancing, and Tim could feel that day by day his strength was leaving him. As he sat at his bench one afternoon the reality of the danger came so forcibly before his eyes that he determined he would tell Mrs. Hart of his treasure and make her promise to see that it reached its destination, should he die before he could himself complete his task. Fortunately just as he had made this resolve a shadow darkened the open doorway and

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the subject of the thoughts herself entered.

"Good day, Mr. Ridley," said the good woman in her cheery tones. "You don't let us folks see much of ye."

Tim smiled faintly and continued his hammering at the sole of an old boot.

"No," he replied, and his voice was tremulous and weak, "I don't get much time to come out, you see."

"Need time! Lackadav, I should like to know the need of working as you do! D'ye mean to make your fortune yet, Tim?"

Tim was silent for a moment, then he looked up seriously into the woman's face.

"Mrs. Hart," he said, "will you sit down a minute? I've something to say to you."

"Say away, Tim! It's a pleasure to hear ye open your lips, I'm sure."

Tim rose and went to the drawer where he kept his money. Bringing it all out he opened it on the table before the astonished eyes of the landlady.

"You get all that!" she said, "and yet live

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as you do! Why, I didn't think you was a miser, Mr. Ridley."

"Listen, Anne," replied Ridley, covering the money with his hand, "I'm not hoarding for my own sake. It belongs to someone else. Will you promise to do me a favor?"

"Aye, that I will," said the woman, "all I can.

"It is only this. I owe a gentleman in London ten pounds. I have got eight here, that I have saved from my earnings. Now, if I die before I can get enough and send it to him, will you see that it goes to the right place? That's the address." And he gave her a piece of paper.

Anne Hart was silent with astonishment.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" she asked. "Didn't you think we were friends enough? Stop your work at once and come to the 'Bar,' and ye shall have the other two pounds today, if it costs me my last penny."

Tim shook his head. Anne persisted, but the old man as steadily refused, and at last the worthy landlady departed in wonder-

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ment, after promising to keep his secret, and to see that what he wanted was done.

"But don't you fear, Tim," she said, as she went, "you'll live many a year yet. Look at me; I am as old as you are, an' I hope ye don't think I'm going to die just yet."

Henceforth Ridley was easier in his mind, and resolved to brace up his strength for a short time longer. In a little more than a year he had finished his task, and got his ten pounds. He would hardly believe that the heap of coppers, sixpences, and shillings before him amounted to so much, and he counted them over and over again. Then he took them to the landlady of the "White Bear," and got them changed into good gold pieces, which were more satisfactory to look at, to say nothing of being more portable. He waited not a single day, but, borrowing enough for his journey from Anne, for the good woman had insisted on doing so much, he set out to London.

About midday he reached the city, and rapidly made his way to headquarters, trem-

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bling with delight and apprehension. Would Mr. Page still be in his old office? And if he was, how would he receive him? He knew the architect's goodness of old too well to fear anything from trusting himself in his hands, but he several times wavered in his purpose when he thought of standing in the presence of one to whom he had shown such base ingratitude, and confessing his crime. And yet he resolved that it must be done. He came to the building containing the offices, and saw the entrance to his old workshop. • It was still kept for cobbler, but the name over the door was a strange one. His agony of mind was such that he could hardly breathe, and he was a long time ascending the stairs with his weak and trembling limbs. He reached the architect's office, and uttered an audible "Thank God!" as he saw the name of Mr. Page still on the glass. After leaning for a moment against the wall of the passage to recover his strength and his resolution, he knocked at the door. "Come in!"

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cried a cheery voice—it was that of the architect himself.

Tim entered, and sank into the nearest chair. Mr. Page looked up from his desk, the old desk on which Ridley had seen the money lying, and his face bore a look of surprise. He was little altered himself, his hair and beard only, if possible, a little whiter; but he evidently had not the slightest recollection of Ridley. Both were silent for some minutes, the architect looking with a questioning gaze.

“Do you now me, Mr. Page?” said Ridley at length. His voice was hoarse and he could hardly command his tongue. The architect shook his head.

“I am Ridley; the cobbler who used to work below, and to whom you were so good. I repaid your kindness by robbing you.”

Ridley spoke hurriedly, as if he feared his breath would not last. Mr. Page rose in astonishment, but his look soon settled into one of pity and kindness.

“I knew it,” he said in a low voice.

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"But I have come to repay you," went on Tim, emptying his money eagerly onto the desk. "Here, take it! Take it! And say—for God's sake say—you will forgive me."

"I have long since forgiven you, Mr. Ridley; for I guessed your temptation. You have fully atoned for the crime. Take this money again, and give it to your grandchild."

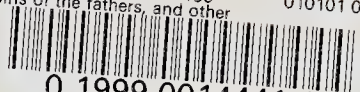
"O God! she is dead! She is dead! Keep the money! Would you have me die and think myself still a thief? Do not force me to despair!"

Then rising suddenly, he tottered from the room, and hastened to the stairs. Mr. Page rose to follow him, shocked at the old man's appearance and emotion. He had just reached the door when he heard a heavy crash on the stairs. It was Ridley who had fallen, and when the architect reached him he was dead.

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